

OBAMANOMICS • BLUE COLLAR, BARE CUPBOARDS

APRIL 2008

IN THESE TIMES

Peace Corps
spies in Bolivia

The upside of
nationalism

SHOWDOWN

— THE —
**UDALL BOYS LEAD
THE DEMOCRATIC
CHARGE FOR THE**
— SENATE —



Cheney Treated in Hospital For an Irregular Heartbeat

WASHINGTON, Nov. 26 (AP) — Doctors at a Washington hospital administered an electrical shock Monday to Vice President Dick Cheney's heart and entered

a life-threatening complication, the formation of blood clots that can move to the brain and cause a stroke.

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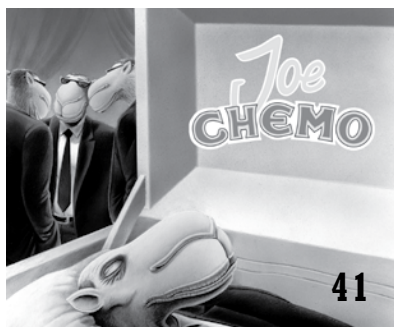


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Red-Boating Obama

SEN. BARACK OBAMA is many things to the right-wing noise machine: a crypto-Muslim, a drug-addled hoodlum, a snob who disdains flag lapel pins, and the husband of an avowed America-hater.

Should Obama get the nomination, we can expect Republicans—and their 527 Swift Boat surrogates—to move far beyond Sen. Hillary Clinton’s “kitchen-sink” pot shots (as Obama calls them) and deploy Web-based slurs in their propaganda. In February, Rupert Murdoch’s *Sunday Times* of London let loose with an article headlined “Right slams Obama as ‘shady Chicago socialist.’”

Is Obama a socialist? We wish. Unfortunately, his economic program is uninspiringly centrist. (See “Obamanomics,” page 34.) Nevertheless, it is true that Obama has been seen with pinkos.

In particular, Obama can be linked to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the Democratic Party-oriented organization that is a member of the Socialist International (known as the Second International or SI), a global association of social democratic parties. SI affiliates currently govern in the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy, among other outposts of social democratic radicalism.

On Feb. 25, 1996, Obama, who was then a candidate for the Illinois state Senate, spoke at a University of Chicago event titled “Employment and Survival in Urban America.” The event’s sponsors were the Chicago Democratic Socialists of America, the University of Chicago DSA Youth Section and the university’s Young Democrats.

The conservative group Accuracy in Media (AIM), which has once again found a reason for existence, thinks it has connected the dots and uncovered a global conspiracy: “DSA describes itself as the largest socialist organization in the United States and the principal U.S.

affiliate of the Socialist International. The Socialist International has what is called ‘consultative status’ with the United Nations. In other words, it works hand-in-glove with the world body.”

Conservative strategist Grover Norquist told the *Sunday Times*’ Sarah Baxter: “[Obama] is open to being defined as a left-wing, corrupt Chicago politician.”

Baxter further reports that “Obama could run into further difficulties” because, between 1999 and 2002, he served on the board of the Woods Fund of Chicago. Not only is Woods an anti-poverty organization, it is also where Bill Ayers serves as a board member. Ayers, a professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was at one time a member of the Weather Underground, and, in 2001, contributed \$200 to Obama’s state Senate campaign. Baxter explains that the Weather Underground was a “left-wing terrorist group.” (Full disclosure: I serve on a board with Ayers, a fine fellow.)

But wait, there’s more!

While Obama was on the board, the foundation provided two grants to the Arab American Action Network, whose president at the time was Mona Khalidi, the wife of Rashid Khalidi, the Columbia University professor (and occasional *In These Times* contributor) who is a critic of Israeli policy in Gaza and the West Bank. You can read all about it in the story “Obama Worked with Terrorist” on WorldNetDaily.com, a right-wing website founded by Joseph Farah, the former editor of the *Sacramento Union*, the newspaper funded by Richard Mellon Scaife and other members of what Hillary Clinton in 1998 aptly termed “this vast right-wing conspiracy.”

Or you can wait until the fall, when it will all be coming to a television commercial near you.

Let the Red-boating begin!

—Joel Bleifuss

IN THESE TIMES

“With liberty and justice for all...”

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mixed reaction

JUST THE FACTS



\$3 trillion: Conservative estimate of total U.S. expenditures for the Iraq War.

15 million: Number of schoolteachers' salaries that \$3 trillion could fund.

43 million: Number of university scholarships it could fund.

530 million: Number of children who could receive healthcare for that amount.

80 Number of years since writer Randolph Bourne penned his essay, "War Is the Health of the State."

“

The sun, the moon and the stars would have disappeared long ago ... had they happened to be within the predatory reach of human hands.

”

—HAVELOCK ELLIS, *THE DANCE OF LIFE*, 1923

LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



QUID PRO QUO

THE QUID:

Back in 2000, Texas oilman Ray L. Hunt was one of the Bush "Pioneers" who bundled \$100,000 in campaign contributions for the president. Surely there was no connection between those donations and Bush's 2001 decision to make Hunt a member of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, where he received classified intelligence briefings. Still, now that Hunt has donated \$35 million to Southern Methodist Uni-

versity for construction of its George W. Bush Presidential Library, you have to wonder what favors might come.

THE QUO:

Wonder no more. As Melissa del Bosque reported in *The Texas Observer*, the fence that the Department of Homeland Security is constructing alongside Texas' border with Mexico is destroying many residents' homes. But outside Granjeno, Texas (population 313), there's a conspicuous gap



when the fence reaches Sharyland Plantation, a 6,000-acre gated community with golf courses, elementary schools and sports park. Sharyland is owned by, you guessed it, Ray L. Hunt.

letters



Congressional might

Regarding David Sirota's "It's the Congress, Stupid" (March 2008), it may be helpful to point out that the leading treatise on the supremacy of Congress over the White House, certainly for domestic policy in the absence of a Depression-style emergency, is Woodrow Wilson's *Congressional Government*. I appreciate the 1973 edition, with Walter Lippmann's 1955 preface.

Gordon MacDougall
Washington, D.C.

Wal-Mart identity politics

There's more to be said about Andrew Young's role as spokesman for "Working Families for Wal-Mart" and his "mission to rally black leaders to block living-wage bills" in Chicago ("Where is the Dream?" February 2008).

In an August 2006 interview with the *L.A. Sentinel*, a black-oriented paper, Young was asked whether he was worried that Wal-Mart forces smaller "mom and pop" stores out of business.

He responded, "Well, I think they should; they ran the 'mom and pop' stores out of my neighborhood, but you see, those are the people who have been overcharging us, selling us stale bread and bad meat and wilted vegetables. And they sold out and moved to Florida. I think they've ripped off our communities enough. First it was the Jews, then it was the Koreans and now it's Arabs; very few black people own these stores."

After protests against this classical form of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, Young resigned from the Wal-Mart job. What we don't need right now (or ever) is "leaders" stirring up hostility between African Americans and immigrants and providing ammunition to right-wing extremists manipulating the immigrant issue to divide the working class.

Martin Oppenheimer
Princeton, N.J.

Dangerous tasers

Kudos to Silja J.A. Talvi for "Tupperware and Tasers" (February 2008). When I heard about these parties, I was horrified. There is little regulation of these weapons (and they *are* weapons), with a majority of the states being silent on this issue.

Why aren't more lawmakers talking about this as a civil rights issue?

Tasers are dangerous, plain and simple. It galls me that the unfortunate experience of the student in Florida who was needlessly tazed by the

police has not resonated with state and local governments.

I hope that it does not take a tragedy of huge proportions to get our governments to take a stand.

Kimberly Lake
Via E-mail

Media objectifies women

Susan Douglas' "The Jamie Lynn Effect" (February 2008) was riveting and bull's-eye, right on target. I'm ashamed of our culture, which through

the avalanching media, reduces women to mere glamorous sexual beings.

At the local market, I'm deeply chagrined to view the magazines with Hollywood tabloid distortions. I call this "negative escapism." Even the major newspapers in my area are tabloid garbage.

Enough!

Thanks to Douglas for being so very much part of the solution, not the problem.

Robert Garavel
Brookfield, Conn.

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Providing shelter for our Winter Soldier

On our website, www.InTheseTimes.com, Assistant Editor Jacob Wheeler covered the Winter Soldier hearings in Washington, D.C., from March 13-16. Wheeler talked with U.S. veterans, many of whom delivered powerful testimony about their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. The event, organized by Iraq Veterans Against the War, was inspired by the original 1971 Winter Soldier hearings that were held in Detroit shortly after the Vietnam War's My Lai massacre was revealed.

In the "Viewpoint" section of our website, check out Ken Brociner's March 27 "The American Left" column. In "Liberals, Progressives and the Left," which was picked up by TomPaine.com, Brociner explores how these terms evolved. But not all readers agree with him. Join this moderated online discussion and comment on the issues he raises.

Also, check out our staff blog, The ITT List, at the bottom of our home page. Web Editor Adam Doster, who wrote this month's cover story, keeps it lively.



contributors

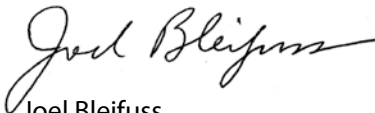
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Ad space is available in our magazine, on our website and in our eNewsletter. Call Jeff at 773.772.0100 x 225 or visit our website for more information.

And congratulations to *In These Times'* Art Director Rachel Jefferson, who designed a poster that was chosen by the U.N. Environment Programme to honor the 22 Nobel Laureates who contributed their skills to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the group that shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with former Vice President Al Gore.

In solidarity.



Joel Bleifuss
Editor & Publisher

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For more information call Anna Grace Schneider at 773-772-0100 x 242 or e-mail her at: anna@inthesetimes.com.



ADRIAN BLEIFUSS PRADOS is a soap-box social critic based in Chicago. In the past, he has collaborated with civil rights attorney H. Candace Gorman in her writings on Guantánamo.



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MICHAEL MORECI is a Chicago-based freelance writer. His fiction and journalistic writings have appeared in a number of publications, including *Stop Smiling*, *North Shore Magazine*, *Other Voices*, *After Hours* and *New City*.



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The work of these writers is supported by the Puffin Foundation First Amendment Fund.

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Vermont legislators are demanding that all of its National Guard troops be sent home from Iraq.

Vermont Argues Iraq War Is 'Mission Expired'

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

WHILE CONGRESS RUNS OUT the clock on President Bush's Iraq War, some Vermont legislators hope to spark a state-by-state movement to quickly withdraw National Guard troops and stanch the flow of blood and treasure.

On Jan. 30, state House members, soon followed by state senators, introduced legislation that called on Vermont's Republican Gov. Jim Douglas to take "all necessary steps" to bring home, as quickly as possible, all members of the Vermont National Guard serving in Iraq.

Rather than arguing whether launching the war was legal or even just, supporters of the bill tacitly concede that Congress' 2002 Authorization to Use

Military Force gave Bush the authority to invade Iraq based on two—and only two—criteria: "(1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

But today, Saddam Hussein and the specter of weapons of mass destruction are both dead; there is no national security threat; and the U.N. resolutions are no longer relevant, the bill's supporters say.

"That very specific mission does not exist today," says state Rep. Michael Fisher (D-Lincoln), who introduced the House bill. And when the mission expired, so too did any legal or constitutional basis for the war or the involvement of the

Vermont National Guard, the bill states.

"The president no longer has the authorization to command our Vermont National Guard units," says Fisher.

"It's bait and switch," says constitutional legal scholar Peter Teachout, about the shifting mission rationales. "If they want troops there until the last suicide bomber has blown himself to kingdom come, they need to be specific."

If the Democratic-controlled Vermont legislature passes the bill, the governor would have to sign it. The legislation would then have to survive a court challenge. A veto seems likely as Gov. Douglas is a supporter of Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). As for a lawsuit, "there is no court in the country that would issue an order requiring withdrawal of troops mid-deployment," says Teachout.

But there are legal precedents, albeit unsuccessful ones, for governors resisting orders to deploy their state's Guard troops. In 1986, then-Gov. Madeleine Kunin joined a five-state effort to stop the Reagan administration from sending Vermont's Army National Guard to Honduras. In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Perpich v. Department of Defense* that governors cannot block a call-up of the National Guard for service overseas. That precedent was limited because, unlike the current challenge, it did not rest on the illegality of the war, some Vermont Democrats argue.

Despite its slim prospects, Fisher insists the bill is more than symbolic: "It may cause a ripple that develops into a larger wave that helps clarify that states do have a role in controlling their National Guard troops, especially when a war effort is illegal."

"If other states join in, it might light a fire under Congress," says Teachout.

Already, legislators in Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin are exploring ways to stoke the flame.

While both sides talk mainly about lives and national security, money circles the Vermont debate. State Rep. Patricia O'Donnell (R-Vernon) points out that if

Vermont withdrew the Guards, Washington might withdraw the \$3 million it contributes to maintaining Vermont's units.

Democrats counter that states are already bearing much of the burden of budgets cuts necessitated by the pricey occupation. At a January press conference, House Speaker Gaye Symington (D-Jericho) said the war in Iraq has had a heavy impact on Vermont and has led to financial cuts in Medicaid and other areas.

The cost also comes in blood. Vermont has one of the highest per capita death rates in Iraq.

The state has tried various strategies to oppose the Iraq War. In February 2007, the legislature approved a non-binding resolution to bring home all the troops. And on March 4, citizens at a Brattleboro, Vt., town meeting passed a resolution calling for its local police to arrest and indict Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney for war crimes. The town of Marlboro, Vt., passed a similar measure.

With Vermont still the only state Bush has never visited, it is unlikely either town will see a presidential perp walk. ■

Spain to Senegal: Stay Home

IN SEPTEMBER 2007, Senegalese television viewers saw the image of a drowned body washed up on a rocky seashore. In the grim advertisement—paid for by Spain's secretary of state for immigration—a grieving mother explains that she hasn't heard from her son in months.

The spot then cuts to Senegalese pop star Youssou N'Dour. Seated on a boat with ocean surf in the background, the singer tells the audience in the Wolof language, "You already know how this story ends. Thousands of young people have died. Don't risk your life for nothing. You are the future of Africa."

Ricardo Losa, a spokesman for the Spanish Ministry of External Affairs and Cooperation, says the aim of the campaign is to encourage the Senegalese to pursue legal avenues of immigration and avoid dangerous sea-crossings.

The drowning deaths of would-be immigrants have added a tragic element to what

is becoming an increasingly heated debate within Spain and across Europe. According to the Spanish Civil Guard, thousands of immigrants have died attempting the voyage. During a 45-day period in 2005, the guard estimated that as many as 1,700 Mauritians were lost at sea.

At a time when far-right politicians are gaining ground across Northern Europe, Spain has taken a different tack. Despite the infamous fences that encase Spain's North African enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, the center-left government of Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero has implemented one of the most liberal immigration regimes in Europe.

Zapatero's government has legalized—or, in the government's words, "regularized"—hundreds of thousands of undocumented foreigners. This has drawn the ire of Spain's right-wing opposition, as well as criticism from other leaders, such as French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who perceive Spain to be an open gate to the European Union.

However, before immigrants reach Spanish soil, many must brave danger-



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As the cliché goes, one man's trash is indeed another man's treasure.

The Freecycle network, a nonprofit group founded in Tucson, Ariz., in 2003, provides a way for individuals to give away unwanted possessions to other people in their community. Executive Director Deron Beal says that the benefits are more environmental than economical: "It's more about reuse and recycle than about getting something for nothing."

Freecycle helps keep more than 400 tons of trash out of landfills per year, according to Beal. The network—or the "cyber curbside," as Beal calls it—has grown from a small community organization made up mostly of acquaintances, to a worldwide network with more than 4.5 million members. There are more than 4,200 groups in 85 countries.

The Freecycle network owes its growth to word-of-mouth promotion and a robust volunteer staff. Volunteer moderators run the local networks, which means they create the groups, manage the community's website and ensure no one is offering anything inappropriate.

Just about anything—from furniture to telephone poles—can be found on the Freecycle network. "If people basically weren't good at giving, Freecycle wouldn't work," says Beal.

For more information, or to join a community group, go to www.freecycle.org.

—Dan Dineen



ous voyages in un-seaworthy vessels. One of the most treacherous routes is between continental Africa and the Canary Islands, off the Moroccan coast.

Given Senegal's dismal economy, many are willing to risk the waters in search of a better life. A Spanish government spokesman is quick to point out that Spain has sponsored vocational programs and agricultural development in the West African country. But three job-training centers are woefully inadequate for a country of more than 12 million people and with nearly 50 percent unemployment.

The Canaries are fertile ground for anti-immigrant sentiments. Speaking at a rally in the Canaries on Feb. 27, Mariano Rajoy, leader of Spain's conservative Popular Party, told supporters that "the immigrants ... must commit themselves to adopting Spanish customs. I understand that there are other countries where there is polygamy. But not here, and it is not enough to say that they must follow the law." Rajoy advocates an "assimilation contract"—a document that would bind immigrants to culturally integrate into Spanish society.

This commitment to "Spanish customs" has become a key theme in the Popular Party's challenge to the Socialist government. The message is problematic at a time when regional and separatist movements are undermining any monolithic view of Spanish identity.

A commentator in the Socialist-friendly newspaper *El País* sarcastically suggested that Spain would be better off if Muslim immigrants retained their traditional prohibition on alcohol rather than adopt the *botellón*, the often raucous, open-air style of drinking now popular with Spanish youth.

Until recent decades, poor Spaniards emigrated to more developed economies in Northern Europe or the Southern Cone of Latin America in search of work.

But Spain is now an importer of labor, and as economic refugees of this new century arrive on its shores, will the Spanish people remember their own history of emigration?

As singer N'Dour's ad says, "You already know how this story ends."

—Adrian Bleifuss Prados



Beds and mattresses are piled into trucks, along with other survival gear taken from some of Seattle's homeless population.

Seattle Battles the Homeless

UNDERNEATH THE I-5 highway in south Seattle, Isaac Palmer had found a spot to sleep. Hidden away from public view, Palmer likely thought he had found a bit of safety in a city where many homeless people die, often as a result of hypothermia, illness, drug overdose or violent attack. But while tucked in his sleeping bag on June 3, 2007, Palmer, 66, was crushed to death by a brush-clearing machine rolling through the weeds that had been his cover.

At the time, Palmer's death didn't provoke public outrage. Instead, it was chalked up to an unfortunate consequence of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

The Washington Department of Transportation says it posted a flyer 48 hours in advance, warning homeless people in the area of a clean-up operation.

Palmer's death didn't raise concerns until Seattle's investigative weekly street newspaper, *Real Change*, uncovered a city government plan—in cooperation with county and state agencies—to rid the area of homeless encampments.

The eradication plan first came to light in October 2007, when *Real Change* Editor Adam Hyla published the results of a public disclosure request, which confirmed that a ramped-up policy of aggressive sweeps had been a city priority since spring 2007. Previously, homeless

encampments were torn down only after multiple complaints, and people who lived in the camps were given enough time to pack their belongings and migrate to another area. It wasn't a perfect approach, but it was better than the recent covertly organized camp eradication.

Not only were Seattle police officers—as well as contractors hired by the Department of Transportation—forcing people off land with little or no advance notice, says *Real Change* Executive Director Tim Harris, homeless people in these camps were told to call a phone number for “assistance”—problem is, the number turned out to be disconnected.

“In the meantime,” says Harris, “the eradication teams were destroying blankets and sleeping bags with machetes, leaving them in shreds. People were being prevented from retrieving their belongings and threatened with arrest if they tried to take back what little they had in the world.”

The City of Seattle's Human Services Department reacted to the disclosure by defending its policies as a “proactive” way of dealing with the dangers of homeless encampments, and as an effective way of getting homeless people out of hiding to access assistance.

Soon after, the city government announced it was revising its eradication plan to give people more notice and to assist the homeless in finding shelter. When *Real Change* filed another public disclosure request a few months later, it found that little had changed in the city's approach.

This past Valentine's Day, a construction worker discovered the dead body of an unidentified, 61-year-old homeless man underneath the same highway in nearby Snohomish County. Like Palmer, the “transient” also died of serious head injuries when a construction vehicle rolled over him in his sleep.

Both deaths occurred on sites selected for construction and highway expansion by the state's Department of Transportation, areas that had long been populated by homeless people.

Boasting one of the highest national per capita rates of resident millionaires, the Puget Sound's overpriced housing has forced many low-income and middle-class residents to make sacrifices to

their economic stability.

From 2004 until 2007, condominium conversions resulted in the loss of nearly 12,000 housing units, according to the Seattle Displacement Coalition, a grassroots advocacy organization. The 2007 King County Annual Growth Report noted that 27,400 middle-class residents (earning between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year) had left the area since 2000, compared with the 57,000 high-income people (earning above \$75,000 per year) who moved into the area during that same period.

The increasing class schism in this corner of the Pacific Northwest has had a dramatic impact on those trying to eek out a living—or simply trying to find food and shelter. In January, the Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless found that there were at least 9,000 homeless individuals in the county in 2007, more than 2,600 of whom were unsheltered. By contrast, in 2000, during the height of the region's dot-com boom, the coalition counted slightly more than 1,000 unsheltered persons, out of a total of 3,000 homeless adults and minors.

“Cities like ours are reinventing themselves to feature urban living as an amenity,” says *Real Change*'s Harris. “People look out their condo windows and see the homeless, and they want something *done* so that they don't have to think about it anymore.”

—Silja J.A. Talvi

Big Oil Imperils Polar Bears

JUST WHEN IT seemed like things couldn't get any worse for the polar bear, Big Oil is moving into its neighborhood.

On Feb. 6, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) put almost 30 million acres of prime Alaskan habitat on the auction block for oil and gas drilling. The decision comes only one month after the Interior Department delayed a landmark ruling on whether to include the marine mammal on its endangered species list, a move that would have afforded it federal protections.

Environmental groups and indigenous communities are accusing the Bush ad-

ministration of using the lag as an opportunity to delve out huge swaths of polar bear habitat to the highest bidder, with potentially devastating consequences.

Eric Jorgensen, an attorney for Earthjustice, a nonprofit law firm based in Oakland, Calif., is representing plaintiffs in a suit against the MMS alleging that its environmental impact study—required prior to the habitat lease—failed to consider the potential combined effects of oil drilling and global warming on the region.

A third suit, spearheaded by the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council



Demonstrators don bear costumes (back) at a congressional hearing about the future of polar bears on Jan. 17.

(NRDC), goes a step further, claiming that MMS scientists were aware of such information, but deliberately concealed it.

“If the true impacts of oil development in the Chukchi Sea were made public and properly analyzed, the area would be protected, not opened up for oil development,” says Chuck Clusen, a senior policy analyst at the NRDC.

Jorgensen agrees. “The Bush administration is rushing ahead to give oil companies as much of the Arctic's Chukchi Sea as it can,” he says, “without disclosing the full impact of oil and gas activities on the people and wildlife that depend on this fragile and rapidly changing ocean.”

The polar bear, the world's largest land carnivore, finds one-fifth of its global habitat in the Chukchi and adjacent Beaufort Seas. The U.S. Geological Survey conservatively estimates the bear's population will decline by two-thirds before 2050.

The lease area, or MMS "Sale 193," also encompasses core habitat for the Pacific walrus and countless other species, and is a migratory route for the endangered bowhead whale, intimately tied to the native Inupiat tribe's way of life.

"The Chukchi Sea is our garden," says Jack Schaefer, tribal council president for the Native Village of Point Hope, one of the communities on Alaska's North Slope. "We've hunted and fished in the ocean for thousands of years."

That way of life, however, is threatened by America's insatiable thirst for oil. According to MMS Director Randall Luthi, "Our nation's demand for energy is increasing." Addressing a crowd of industry executives as he opened bidding for the Chukchi on Feb. 6, he warned, "We can either close the gap with domestic production or increase our reliance on foreign sources. This sale represents an opportunity to lessen that gap."

The MMS applauded the record bids for the lease of Alaska's assets, bringing in almost \$2.7 billion from oil and gas

companies eager to tap the estimated 15 billion barrels of oil and 75 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that lie beneath the Chukchi. The big winner was Royal Dutch Shell, which paid more than \$2.1 billion to stake its claim on 2,758,403 carefully selected acres.

The groups suing the MMS—including the Native Village of Point Hope, the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, among several others—say the bids should have been suspended until after a ruling on the polar bear's status.

After more than a year of accepting public and expert comments, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)—also a part of the Interior Department—was facing a legal deadline to rule on the polar bears' endangered status by Jan. 9. That decision, however, was delayed. A USFWS spokesperson says the delay resulted from the "huge volume" of public comments submitted on the issue.

It's not only the public that is showing interest. On Jan. 30, the Senate Com-

mittee on the Environment and Public Works held a hearing on the fate of polar bears. While much of the testimony surrounded inconclusive polar bear population data and ongoing debates about climate change, all sides agreed that there is a dearth of knowledge. It is unknown how many fish and bird species rely upon the Chukchi Sea for their survival, or how those species would respond to the booms of exploration and increased drilling.

It's also unknown whether the most advanced technologies available would be capable of protecting an already-threatened ecosystem from the potentially devastating effects of a massive oil spill. Shockingly, MMS' own data predicts the likelihood of such a spill occurring to be within a range of 33 percent to 51 percent.

"The technology to effectively contain and clean up oil spills does not currently exist," Margaret Williams, director of the World Wildlife Federation's Bering Sea Program, told the Senate panel, "so this oil lease is a disaster waiting to happen."

—Jessica Pupovac

appall-o-meter

2.4 Public Affairs Journalism, Improved

Was it deadline punchiness that made the editor do it, or was the incident one man's *cri du coeur* against the mental feebleness of contemporary newspaperdom?

All we know right now is that the *North County Times* of suburban San Diego somehow published this tidbit: "We will, sooner rather than later, become a no-kill city, and this is the greatest step in that direction," Councilman Tony Cardenas, who co-authored the bill, said as he strangled a kitten at a City Hall news conference."

The unembellished Associated Press wire copy on which the *Times* story was based merely read that the councilman had "held" the kitty.

The editor who introduced the error was fired, while another was suspended.

1.2 The Not-So-Subtle Candidate

Love her or hate her, you have to give Hillary Clinton props for her long overdue valentine to the nation's press corps.

In Austin, Texas, for a town hall meet-

ing at the city's convention center, Clinton and her staffers booked a newsroom, of sorts, in another building for the media caravan. The room just happened to be the men's latrine.

Tables were set up in unsavory proximity to the urinals, reports a blogger for the *Wall Street Journal*, which "made for a more spirited rush than usual for the best working space."

Nicely done. Maybe she wouldn't make such a bad president after all.

4.3 'Pepsi, Clean Up Your Room!'

Pity the poor yuppie. Every decision in life is fraught with such significance—including, apparently, choosing how to name one's offspring. The tried and true methods that served generations of parents—e.g., the Supreme-Court-Justice-vs.-porn-star test—no longer suffice.

"We live in a marketing-oriented so-



ciety," an author of eight books on baby names told the *Wall Street Journal*. "People who understand branding know that when you pick the right name, you're giving your child a head start."

It's gotten so bad that many now seek the ministrations of expert baby-naming consultants. One such "nameologist" in a Chicago suburb "charges up to \$350 for a package,

including three half-hour phone calls and a personalized manual describing the name's history, linguistic origins and personality traits," according to the *Journal*.

Consider the couple who chose "Beckett" for their son.

"That C-K sound is very well regarded in corporate circles," the father told the *Journal*, citing Kodak and Coca-Cola as examples. "The hard stop forces you to accentuate the syllable in a way that draws attention to it."

—Dave Mulcahey

Actors Union Copies Writers' Script

STRIKES ARE RARE these days. And winning one is almost as rare as sighting an ivory-billed woodpecker.

But the three-month Writers Guild strike against the television and film studios that ended in February won important rights for creative workers, and proved that a group of democratically empowered workers with public and labor movement solidarity could win against a highly concentrated and profitable industry. After hard-line bargaining by the industry trade group, the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, dragged out the writers strike, studio executives stepped in to make a deal in late January—as they could have done much earlier.

Now the actors may follow the writers' script. Though unlikely to strike, the 120,000-member Screen Actors Guild (SAG) will follow the writers' contract pattern but attempt to add a few sweeteners to its deal, as contract talks get underway before the June 30 contract expiration.

The studio heads are likely to calculate that provoking an actors' strike will be bad for business. Even the chance for disruption could threaten the studios' plans to recover from production delays caused by the writers' strike.

But the actors are not as primed for a battle as the writers were. SAG and the other major actors' union, the American Federation of Television and Radio Actors, have just recently begun to cooperate after resolving earlier tensions. And SAG is still going through its internal discussions about bargaining priorities.

Also, a group of high-profile pro-union actors—including George Clooney and Tom Hanks—openly pressured SAG leaders to start negotiations early. The "A-List" actors also propose that only actors who have recently earned more than a yet-to-be-determined threshold should be able to vote on the contract, not the many union members who are erratically employed.

The actors' contract is likely to include the gains writers made, primarily pay for new and recycled material used in all new media, especially the Internet. Although

snapshot



Palestinians inspect their destroyed houses following the deadly Israeli assault in Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip on March 3. Israeli forces withdrew from the territory after five days of violence that killed more than 110 Palestinians. (Photo by Mohammed Abed/AFP/Getty Images)

the provisions are phased in over three years and give studios some loopholes, writers will eventually be paid 2 percent of distributors' gross revenue. With new Internet production likely to increase, and studios likely to put full libraries of older TV shows on the Web, the percentage could mean big financial gains for writers.

Writers also won the right to see the full text of Internet deals the studios make, putting them in a stronger position for negotiations in three years. And they won control of content after the initial production, including the wide range of ancillary markets that are likely to expand (such as products based on characters in writers' scripts).

SAG may push to improve the meager payments for DVDs, a demand the writers dropped just before the strike, when they thought studios were ready to make a deal on their requests for new media payment. The creative workers' unions are also backing a new bill introduced in the California legislature by state Sen. Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica), a former TV actor. The bill would guarantee that when

studios sell rights to their productions—which they now often sell at a discount to their subsidiaries—writers, actors and other industry workers would receive a percentage of the fair market price, not the artificially cheap deal between parent and subsidiary businesses.

According to conventional wisdom, writers didn't want to be seen as part of the labor movement and certainly wouldn't picket the studios. But two years of internal education and debate prepared them for their successful fight.

"This strike, more than anything, demonstrated the value of democratic union governance," says Jeff Hermanson, assistant executive director of the Writers Guild of America-West. "There was dissent, debate, angry words at times, but we stayed united because we have a tradition of democracy and respecting the will of our members."

"We won," he says, "because our members were out there expressing themselves in a great flowering of creative thinking, and they were changed in the process."

—David Moberg

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

Debt: Our 9 Trillion Pound Gorilla



WHO WOULD HAVE thought that we might ever miss Ross Perot? Squawking at us with his graphs and pie charts about the dangers of deficit spending and the mounting national debt, Perot was especially outraged that the debt had gone from \$1 trillion in 1980 to \$4 trillion by 1992.

He got people's attention about mortgaging our children's futures and

won 19 percent of the vote in the 1992 presidential race, the most for a third party candidate since Teddy Roosevelt in 1912. (This despite being featured on the cover of *Weekly World News* with space aliens.)

As we brace for the Swift-boating to come this summer, I find myself nostalgic for a Perot infomercial where he would make clear that my daughter, or my friend's infant—all of us, as of now—

each carries nearly \$31,000 of this debt. And we don't owe it only to each other.

We are in major hock to China, Japan and other foreign countries. Given the subprime disaster, rising unemployment, a reeling stock market, a teetering construction industry and considerable under-reported inflation—you know, all the markings of the “r” word—it is striking that the debt is not a major campaign issue for the Democrats.

Today the national debt is \$9.2 trillion. And hardly anyone is talking about this. We've had rabbinical debates about healthcare and moronic charges and counter-charges about who's ready “on day one” to be president. But the poor bastard who walks into the Oval Office next January will confront the \$9 trillion-plus pound gorilla sitting in the room.

That gorilla has become obscenely engorged because of George W. Bush and his cronies. His stupefying \$3.1 trillion budget proposed for 2009, with an 8 percent increase for the Pentagon and more than \$400 billion in deficit spending, got minimal coverage, unveiled as it was on the eve of Super Tuesday, when 60 percent of the network news coverage focused on the campaign.

Almost immediately under Bush's watch, the annual deficit—which each year gets piled onto our overall, accumulated debt—started soaring. A major contributor to this,

of course, has been the occupation of Iraq. Remember when Donald Rumsfeld suggested the war would cost \$50 billion to \$60 billion? Remember when White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsay projected the cost at more like \$200 billion, and got canned? A recent estimate by Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz and Harvard professor Linda Bilmes place the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan at \$3 trillion. They actually count everything, not just the immediate day-to-day costs, but all of the indirect and deferred costs like healthcare and disability payments for veterans.

But even the crippling human and financial costs of the Iraq War have taken a back seat in presidential politics to “the economy”—as if the two are different subjects. They aren't, and the Democrats, especially

those running for Congress, should make this, and the Bush debt, their mantra. They would do well to make the kind of simple visual comparison columnist David Leonhardt recently did in the

The human and financial costs of the Iraq War, the economy and Bush's debt ought to be the mantra for Democrats running for Congress.

New York Times. Taking a more conservative approach to the war costs than Stiglitz and Bilmes, Leonhardt still came up with a price tag of \$1.2 trillion.

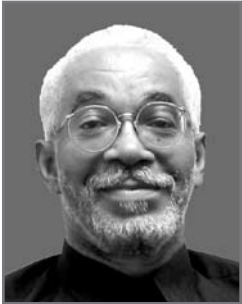
What could Americans get instead for that money? How about universal preschool for all 3 year olds and 4 year olds, at the bargain price of \$35 billion? How about universal healthcare, a rebuilding of the nation's infrastructure, actually securing our ports as recommended by the 9/11 Commission, and a new “war” on poverty?

All of this and more have been denied the American people because of Bush's borrow-and-spend war spree, coupled with his Marie Antoinette tax cuts. And the Bush debt imposes binding constraints on any desired initiatives of the next president, as Bill Clinton learned when he inherited the first Bush's deficit pile-ups. In fiscal year 2006, the interest on the national debt was \$406 billion; imagine pissing that away on your Visa bill.

Debt is the connective tissue between the disastrous war in Iraq, which most Americans consider a mistake (or worse), and the economy, which most Americans feel is in the toilet. “Borrow and Squander” or, if that's too many syllables, “Borrow and Waste,” should be the mantra chanted at Republicans—especially those who claim to know little about the economy yet want to stay in Iraq (and other war zones, no doubt) for the next 100 years. ■

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

The Man Or the Movement?



IN WRITING A book about Harold Washington, Chicago's first black mayor, I wondered whether it was the people or the person that made the movement.

I had initially subscribed to the notion that the people produce the leadership, but my look back at the Washington years forced a change in my thinking. Washington's success was largely a product of

his personal dynamism and unique political virtuosity. Had he not existed, I concluded, Chicago would still be looking for its first black mayor.

The political phenomenon of Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) again brings to mind that question of what came first, the person or the movement.

The thought that Americans may actually elect a black man to be commander in chief is an extraordinary development for a nation that fully enfranchised African Americans only 43 years ago. For many Americans—particularly older African Americans—the prospect of a black president seems almost inconceivable.

A multiracial movement made up of political enthusiasts is propelling Obama's candidacy. They are folks who are motivated by something beyond partisan passions.

But, again, is Obama a product of this movement or did he, with his unique combination of personal qualities, produce it?

Before the Obama campaign caught the fancy of the nation, many social critics were describing our current racial climate in increasingly dismal terms. Were I pressed to characterize the period, I might have called it the age of two "n-words": niggers and nooses. But again, that was B.O.—Before Obama.

This n-word negativity began intensifying after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It revealed the desperate plight of the nation's black poor and it was reinforced by the Bush administration's inadequate response. Rapper Kanye West famously quipped on national television that "George Bush doesn't care about black people," and his remarks resonated across black America.

Following the Katrina debacle, a number of rancorous racial incidents began darkening the public mood: actor

Michael Richards shouting "nigger" and evoking lynching at a comedy club; shock jock Don Imus uttering "nappy-headed hos" on the public airwaves.

Then, thousands gathered in Jena, La., in 2007 to register their anger at the racially disparate punishment of black students following the incident of a hanging noose on school property. The case triggered one of the largest black protest marches since the civil rights movement.

When nooses began popping up all over the country, many commentators began bemoaning the return of overt racism. A series of racially charged cases of police abuse reinforced those dire assessments.

Last August, the predominantly black National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) news service published an article with the headline "Mounting Racial Tensions 'Resegregating' America, Activists Say." The piece typified the growing consensus that the racial climate was worsening, and

it quoted a number of people who charted the decline.

Mark Potok, director of the Intelligence Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, a group that monitors racial hate activities across the nation, told the NNPA, "It's undeniable that we are resegregating education in a dramatic way and we are also becoming more segregated residentially than we were."

Potok was not alone in his assessment that these are troubled racial times.

In 2008, however, analysts are struggling to account for white America's apparent willingness to hand the nation's reins to a black man. But how has the racial attitude changed so drastically in a matter of mere months?

One reason: Obama.

Activists tend to debunk the so-called "Great Man" theory of history because of its potential to demobilize movements.

And other influences deserve consideration, of course. Hip-hop, athletics, movies, the news media and political activism have made many Americans more comfortable with African Americans' presence in the public square.

However, all of that was true last summer, as well. The difference between then and now is the prominence of a movement created by one black man's presidential campaign. That movement would not exist without Barack Obama. ■

In 2008, analysts are struggling to account for white America's apparent willingness to hand the nation's reins to a black man.

BY RALPH SELIGER

Secular Jews and the 'Jewish State'



AERICAN JEWS REMAIN, along with African Americans, the most left-leaning ethnic community in the country. While many support the State of Israel uncritically, some Jews express their concern for Israel's welfare by joining organizations and activities that challenge certain policies and promote social change.

Last November, "The Other Israel Film Festival: Images of Arab Citizens of Israel" was inaugurated in a partnership with Manhattan's Jewish Community Center and several other institutions.

In January 2008, Meretz USA, a progressive Zionist group that I work with, along with the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace (*Brit Tzedek v'Shalom*), focused their annual "Israel Symposium" on Israeli Arabs, who make up 20 percent of Israel's population.

Another example of this trend of Jewish interest in Israel's Arabs is the New Israel Fund (NIF), an American nonprofit that funds community organizing efforts and legal court challenges in areas such as environmental activism and the advancement of civil rights for Arab citizens of Israel, the physically disabled, women, gays and immigrant groups.

In the fall of 2007, the NIF brought Israeli speakers to a series of forums around the United States to examine Israel's ethnic, cultural and economic diversity. This was discussed in the context of a "Jewish state" and how this concept resonates, if at all, with American Jews. Eliezer Yaari, the NIF's executive director in Israel, stated a preference for describing Israel as a "state of Jews" rather than the more ideological construct of the "Jewish state."

For their part, Israeli Arabs increasingly identify themselves as "Palestinian citizens of Israel." Even as prominent an individual as Michael Mousa Karayanni, a professor of law and vice dean at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, speaking at the same NIF forum, indicated his sense of alienation as an Arab Israeli. Karayanni is one of the authors of a 2006 statement that demands Arab cultural autonomy, the elimination of the explicitly Jewish character of the national anthem and flag, and changing immigration policy to eliminate preferential treatment for Jews.

This last point on immigration strikes at the heart of

how and why most Jews feel invested in a Jewish state. Israel's Law of Return, granting the right of entry and immediate citizenship to most people with at least a single Jewish grandparent (offering sanctuary to precisely those whom the Nazis prosecuted as Jews), is a direct response to Jewish vulnerability during the centuries of degradation and oppression that culminated in the Holocaust.

Most American Jews are uncomfortable with a theocratic state in the way that Iran and Saudi Arabia are Islamic, or that the Christian right envisions this country. The fact that the words "Jew" and "Jewish" refer both to a religious group and a historic people 3,000 years old causes confusion.

Although half of American Jews have no religious affiliation, they are usually defined as followers of a faith rather than as a nationality or ethnicity (as they were regarded in the former Soviet Union). But Israel was founded in 1948 as a home for the Jews as a people, as well as "all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex"—as stated in its declaration of independence.

Still, under Israel's dysfunctional electoral system of proportional representation, which requires multi-party coalitions to obtain a parliamentary majority, religious parties exercise outsized power in such matters as marriage, divorce and conducting business on the Sabbath. (Under current rules, any minority interest that commands more than 2 percent of the vote may enter parliament with two seats.)

Progressive Israelis strive for a society that is "Jewish" as a reflection of its majority cultural influences rather than by law. Even now, Israel has some bi-national and bi-cultural characteristics. Israel runs to the rhythms of both the Jewish and Muslim calendars. For example, its weekends are Fridays and Saturdays, the Muslim and Jewish Sabbaths. And although Hebrew is the preeminent tongue, Arabic is the second of Israel's two official languages, and there is some Arabic programming on public television and radio.

But Israel has a ways to go before all of its citizens feel equally at home. A significant number of progressive American Jews are open to learning more about this reality. Yet it is incumbent upon Israelis—Jews and Arabs alike—to negotiate a *modus vivendi* that satisfies all. ■

RALPH SELIGER is the editor of *Israel Horizons*, the quarterly publication of Meretz USA and of the Meretz USA weblog.

Most American Jews are uncomfortable with a theocratic state in the way that Iran and Saudi Arabia are Islamic.

BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

The Nadir of Nader



HE'S BACK. AND he's got your back. Yes, Ralph Nader has thrown down that withering, raggedy old gauntlet in one more tiresome bid for the presidency. Our modern-day Don Quixote will mount his high horse, yet again, to announce why he believes he is the only true independent candidate for the White House.

Following Nader's Feb. 24 announcement that he is running as an independent candidate, the *New York Times* noted that "reactions from the Democratic candidates on Sunday ranged from disdainful to dismissive."

To say the least.

Nader. The mere mention of that particular n-word gives me the heebie jeebies.

For decades, Nader was a hero to progressives who cherished consumer and environmental rights. He was the advocate extraordinaire, revered for his attacks on cutthroat corporate interests that were stealing the American dream and soiling the environment.

At 74, he has launched four runs for the presidency. That's at least two too many.

In 2004, he ended up with about 1 percent of the vote.

Nader's insistence on hogging the electoral limelight in 2000 siphoned off crucial support from Democratic nominee Al Gore and helped sweep in our most disastrous president ever. Can you say Halliburton? The Iraq invasion? No Child Left Behind? The Patriot Act? The attorney general witchhunt? The subprime mess?

No doubt Gore deserves a good dose of blame. He ran a mediocre and schizophrenic campaign. He shunned the best thing he had going—Bill Clinton. Still, the former vice president went on to tell us some Inconvenient Truths and win a Nobel Peace Prize.

Nader says he's got your back. He is doing this for you. He says the other candidates are not talking about our "bloated" military budget, corporate criminals and the leading political parties' abuse of the electoral system.

But it's really all about Ralph, who has emerged after four years in the wilderness to discover that Democrats may have the best shot at complete control of D.C., in a long, long time.

In a perfect world, there would be room for debate about the role of independent parties. But thanks to Bush, this world is far from perfect.

Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), for his part, is not the messiah—despite his cult-like following. Obama, once a solid progressive, is now running at breakneck speed toward the center. At the Feb. 26 debate in Cleveland, he cheerily told voters that he is no liberal. Yet Obama is the only wall between 100 more years in Iraq and economic disaster at home.

Meanwhile, Nader is trying to hold on to that miniscule pinpoint of limelight and just a few more headlines.

It's pathetic.

Yes, maybe I'm mean and unfair. The 2000 election debacle was mean and unfair too, and Nader had a hand in it. Yes, maybe marginalizing Nader goes against the grain of America's democratic traditions of inclusion and independence. As a progressive, I am generally sympathetic to those arguments.

But in a perfect world, there would be room for a spirited and substantive debate about the role of independent parties in American politics today. Thanks to George W.

Bush, however, this world is far from perfect.

The day after his announcement, Nader appeared on Ron Silver's daily talk show on Sirius radio. He told Americans that we must "remember our history." "The best ideas in American history have come from small parties," he intoned. "Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party, he ran for president five times, he put forth social security, unemployment compensation, the progressive income tax, labor standards ..."

My friend, the late Jim Weinstein, could tell Nader a few things about history. In fact, he did. In 2001, Weinstein, the founder of *In These Times* and an astute historian of the left, drew a barrage of brickbats with his piece, "Let's Crash the Party (Instead of Throwing Our Own)."

Revisiting the 2000 debacle, Weinstein wrote that, "instead of building a constituency for his ideas, as he claimed to be doing, Nader divided an already existing one and did a terrible disservice to progressives. Clearly, the constituency for Nader's ideas is much greater than his following. For every person who cast a vote for Nader, there were at least 10 who shared his views on many issues but voted Democratic."

Nader created a gulf among progressives that led his followers "up a blind alley, where they may be lost for some time to come."

Jim was so right then—and now.

Nader, get lost. ■

Recruiting Spies in the Peace Corps

Washington's blunder in Bolivia strains relations with the Morales government

BY JEAN FRIEDMAN-RUDOVSKY

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA—IN FEBRUARY, allegations surfaced that the U.S. embassy in La Paz, located in western Bolivia, has been asking Peace Corps volunteers and Fulbright scholars to provide intelligence information to the U.S. embassy about foreign nationals in Bolivia.

"It flies in the face of what the Fulbright program is all about," says John Alexander van Schaick, 23, a Fulbright scholar from Rutgers University, who says that last year, an embassy official instructed him to report on Venezuelans and Cubans living and working in Bolivia. "We're supposed to be here to help with mutual understanding, not intelligence operations."

This allegation, along with a similar incident involving Peace Corps volunteers, has again called into question the U.S. role in Bolivia, testing the thickness of the ice under its feet here in the heart of the Andes.

Anatomy of a scandal

On Nov. 5, 2007, van Schaick entered the U.S. embassy in La Paz for a routine orientation in preparation for his year-long fellowship in Bolivia. After meeting with various cultural affairs officials, the 2006 Rutgers grad met with Assistant Regional Security Adviser Vincent Cooper.

"He said that he was going to give me a 'scaled-down' version of the normal briefing given to U.S. embassy employees," says van Schaick. According to the scholar, Cooper explained that although Fulbright participants are not U.S. government employees, the embassy likes to keep them "under its wing."

The meeting consisted mainly of helpful tips for the newcomer—heed caution while on public transportation, steer clear of street protests and respond appropriately in medical emergencies.

"But the part that made my ears perk up was when he casually said, 'Alex, if, when you are out in the field, should you encounter any Venezuelans or Cubans like field workers or doctors,' that I should report to the U.S. embassy with their names and where they live," van Schaick explains.

His experience wasn't an isolated incident. On July 29, 2007, Cooper visited a group of 30 Peace Corps trainees in Bolivia to give a security talk that included similar instructions, this time with respect to Cubans.

"We were immediately alarmed by the request," said Peace Corps Bolivia Deputy Director Doreen Salazar in an interview during the initial investigation. "We stopped the meeting and made clear to our group that they had no obligation to report anything to the embassy."

Salazar said she then lodged a com-

plaint with the U.S. embassy and was assured that it wouldn't happen again.

"After this mistake, our principal security officer instructed his personnel not to repeat this type of inappropriate information," the U.S. embassy wrote in a two-page statement issued Feb. 11, three days after ABC News released the story of the Fulbright and Peace Corps incidents. "We regret any misunderstanding that this isolated incident—which happened seven months ago and which was corrected immediately—might have produced," the embassy wrote.

The U.S. State Department has also repeatedly called the request an error and a breach of U.S. policy. U.S. volunteers and academics are not expected to be involved in U.S. intelligence operations abroad, even if the programs are government funded, as is the case with the Peace Corps program and the Fulbright scholarship, according



Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca (right) shakes hands with U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia Phillip Goldberg before the start of a meeting in La Paz on Feb. 13. at the U.S. embassy.

JAVIER MAMANI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

to State Department officials.

Yet there has been no explanation as to why this happened again just three months later, especially if embassy officials were instructed not to make such requests.

Immediate fallout

When the news broke on Feb. 8, the Bolivian government and U.S. officials were already engaged in a scuffle. The Bolivian government was facing allegations that it had been illegally spying on the opposition movement's civic leaders and its elected officials.

The Fulbright/Peace Corps incidents brought the tension level neck-high. Within 48 hours of the story's release, Bolivian President Evo Morales had declared Cooper an "undesirable," and the United States had called Cooper back to Washington for an internal investigation. The Bolivian government then launched a criminal investigation into the incidents—marking the first time in Bolivian history that the government has brought criminal charges against a U.S. embassy official.

The affair's legal gravity is indubitable. According to the Bolivian penal code, Cooper could be given up to 30 years in prison without the possibility of parole for espionage—Bolivia's most severe sentence.

Moreover, if either van Schaick or the Peace Corps volunteers had provided information then used by the embassy in an espionage operation, they, too, could have been liable to the same prison time.

It was in this context that representatives of the two governments sat down to talk five days after the story broke. It was the sixth time in the two years since Morales took office that U.S. Ambassador in Bolivia Philip Goldberg had been officially summoned to explain an action or statement the Bolivian government found questionable.

"We accept the U.S. government's explanations and we want to get beyond this incident," said Foreign Relations Minister David Choquehuanca after the lengthy session. "We want positive bilateral relations."

The bigger picture

One of the central tenets of this cooperation was tested—and secured—just 24

hours later. On Feb. 14, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means approved the extension of its trade preferences, which limits or eliminates tariffs on more than \$200 million worth of Bolivian goods sold in U.S. markets annually. Up to 150,000 Bolivian jobs depend on the viability of these exports (everything from wooden window frames to

U.S. officials have not explained why an American embassy worker in Bolivia asked a Fulbright scholar to spy for the U.S. government after specifically instructed not to make such requests.

Brazil nuts)—a significant figure in South America's poorest nation.

Though the 10-month extension falls short of the two-year renewal the Bolivian government continues to lobby for, it is a significant victory given that a year ago, the Bush administration was threatening not to renew at all (as a way to punish Morales for his refusal to sign a bilateral free trade agreement).

Bolivia is one of the biggest recipients of funding for United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the world—with more than \$120 million flowing in annually, which goes toward everything from organic coffee farms to military anti-narcotic programs to health clinics to inner-city youth theaters.

Over the years, this funding has been a source of contention as allegations of a bias against Morales and his Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) Party have surfaced.

In a 2005 investigation for *NACLA Report on the Americas* magazine, journalist Reed Lindsay uncovered declassified internal State Department memos dated from 2002 that alleged USAID was directing its money to "help build moderate, pro-democracy political parties that can serve as a counterweight to the radical MAS or its successors."

And recently published investigations into USAID, and specifically into its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), which handled "democracy promotion" work in Bolivia from 2004 until 2007, have been similarly alarming.

"In Bolivia, USAID-OTI has focused its efforts on the separatist movements in regions rich in natural resources, such as Santa Cruz and Cochabamba," wrote Eva Golinger, a Venezuelan-American attorney, in "Washington's Silent War on Venezuela and Bolivia," a September 2007 article in *Green Left Weekly*. "The majority of the \$13.3 million has been

given to organizations and programs working toward 'reinforcing regional governments,' with the intention of weakening the Morales government."

The Morales government has therefore made a show of its anger at USAID, declaring in August 2007, that "the door is open" for the group to leave Bolivia. But one month later, the government quietly signed a contract to renew USAID's work here for another year.

Though big steps—such as kicking USAID out—do not seem to be on the Morales agenda, the Bolivian president has taken small steps to fulfill his promise of lessening U.S. involvement in the country.

Economically, Bolivia today is far less dependent on the United States, especially given its close relationship with oil-rich ally Venezuela, and a five-year, \$1 billion deal with Iran to finance everything from gas exploration to dairy farms.

In the last few days of February, Morales was once again lambasting the U.S. embassy here for conspiring against Bolivia's newly written constitution, which must be approved or rejected in a national referendum this year.

But even in the wake of recent scandals, Morales has confirmed his commitment to making it work with the United States.

"We would never look to break neither diplomatic nor commercial relations," he stated at a recent press conference, despite recent "political problems."

The ice, though constantly thinning, seems far from breaking. ■

SHOWDOWN

THE UDALL BOYS LEAD THE DEMOCRATIC CHARGE FOR THE SENATE

BY ADAM DOSTER

DESPITE BEING FIRST COUSINS, Tom and Mark Udall act more like brothers. Their parents were close, so the two spent plenty of time together growing up, sharing dinners with their siblings, cracking jokes and playing under the Arizona sun. As the boys grew older, their friendship matured. Outdoorsmen to the core, they possess a common love of mountain climbing, and together have scaled some of the world's highest peaks.

"We think a lot alike," says Tom, "and we enjoy the outdoors together. We enjoy being around each other."

It's a quintessential family narrative, but the Udalls aren't the quintessential family. Based in the interior West, the Udall clan boasts a lineage that spans four generations and has deep roots in both major political parties. They're the most important political family most Americans have never heard of. But after this election cycle, that could change.

Tom and Mark are progressive U.S. representatives in New Mexico and Colorado, respectively, who have each set their sights on an open, Republican-held Senate seat in their home states. Meanwhile, Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.)—the Udalls' second cousin—is in a tight re-election campaign himself, one that Democrats are targeting heavily. If all goes according to the party's plan, two new Udalls would be in the Senate, one would be out, and a veto-proof majority would be within reach.

Enough with Clintons and Bushes. Meet the Udalls.

It's a family affair

It's a common joke out in the Mountain states: the Udalls are "the Kennedys of the West." Terry Bracy, chairman of the Morris K. Udall Foundation and a longtime family friend, thinks the comparison is misguided. "They never acquired any wealth and never sought any wealth," he says. "They were interested in the essentials of life. Maybe it came from their heritage."

The bedrocks of that heritage are humble beginnings and a strong Mormon faith, embodied initially by the family patriarch David King Udall. His story, and that of his descendents, reads like something out of a Gabriel García Márquez novel.

A year after his birth in 1851, David King's dirt-farming English parents traveled west from Missouri along the Mormon trail to Utah. After years working on farms and railroads, young David was sent by Mormon pioneer Brigham Young to serve as a Mormon bishop in Northern Arizona.

Soon after moving to Arizona, the federal government targeted him on trumped-up charges of unlawful cohabitation and perjury. The former charge was dropped but the second stuck, and in 1885, he spent time in a Michigan federal penitentiary. Just months into his three-year sentence, however, Democratic President Grover Cleveland issued him an unconditional pardon, affixing the family's party affiliation for life.

Unlike other partisans, David King—who was a polygamist—could not afford to alienate political opponents. His second wife, Ida Hunt, was a Republican, an identity she would pass on to her heirs.

David King also relied on Morris Goldwater, the Democratic Jewish mayor of Prescott, Ariz., (and uncle of conservative icon Barry Goldwater), who once bailed him out of jail. As religious minorities in Arizona public life, Morris and David King were natural allies and their families forged a bond that endured even after their politics diverged.

30 years, eventually chairing the House Interior Committee.

Together, the Udall brothers solidified what has been called “the Udall Ethic” of conservation, public service and consensus building. Stewart, a WWII veteran, championed the Great Society’s landmark environmental bills, most notably the 1964 Wilderness Act. Mo was also a dedicated

was this feeling,” he says, “that it’s a very noble calling to serve the public.”

After graduating from the New Mexico School of Law in 1977, Tom clerked for Chief Justice Oliver Seth of the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals and was eventually appointed assistant U.S. attorney. In 1990, he was elected attorney general of New Mexico, a position he

THE UDALL CLAN BOASTS A LINEAGE THAT SPANS FOUR GENERATIONS AND HAS DEEP ROOTS IN BOTH MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES.

Says Mark Udall: “It was that kinship and that friendship and that joint experience on the frontier, where Mother Nature was really the adversary instead of other human beings, that’s really informed our legacy of public service.”

Instead of becoming church leaders, David King’s four sons moved into government life. One served in the Arizona state legislature, another was mayor of Phoenix and two were appointed to the Arizona Supreme Court. The most accomplished was Levi—the only Democrat—who took his role on the bench seriously. “My grandfather [Levi] used to talk about public servants,” says Tom. “He would never say ‘politician.’ And he said if good people don’t step forward and serve the public, then the scoundrels will take it over.”

Among his many accomplishments, Levi wrote the 1948 decision that enfranchised Native Americans in Arizona, a controversial position among both Mormons and the state’s white population at large.

Levi’s two sons, Stewart and Mo, took the Udall brand national. Stewart served four terms as a Democratic congressman in Arizona before joining the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as interior secretary. The younger Mo, an accomplished basketball player who played one year for the NBA’s Denver Nuggets, won Stewart’s vacant seat in 1961 and served

environmentalist, spearheading the 1980 Alaska Lands Act, which doubled the size of America’s national parks system. He also spoke out against the Vietnam War and led a movement for institutional reform in Congress, taking on campaign finance issues and the antiquated seniority system.

Like their father, Stewart and Mo understood the importance of safeguarding the rights of people of color in the Southwest. They were active in the fight to integrate Arizona’s schools long before *Brown v. Board* reached the U.S. Supreme Court, and Mo was a leading advocate for the Indian Child Welfare Act, which gave tribal governments a strong voice in child custody proceedings.

How did the Udalls win votes with political views that were to the left of many of their constituents? People close to the family suggest that all the Udalls share a compassionate sensibility that disarms political opponents. “They have the gift of humor,” says Bracy, “and they have that special way of communicating with people that seems not to offend them.”

The next generation

As if on schedule, a fourth generation of Udalls is emerging from the Rocky Mountain valleys and rising to public office. Tom, son of Stewart, knew he wanted to pursue politics from an early age. “There

held for two terms. When current Gov. Bill Richardson left his congressional seat in 1998, Tom jumped at the chance to fill it. Five terms later, Tom is still in office, garnering huge majorities in a racially diverse district.

Mark Udall took a different route to D.C. After graduating from Williams College in 1972, he worked for Colorado Outward Bound, a nonprofit that runs youth wilderness programs. In his 20 years with the organization, Mark transformed Outward Bound into a national institution that serves 60,000 people each year. But after holding every position in the organization, it was time for a new challenge.

“Sure enough,” Bracy jokes, “the gene kicked in at some point.”

In 1997, Mark won his first race for the Colorado state legislature, filling a seat that only one other Democrat had held in 30 years. After walking the district for months, he found he had a knack for campaigning.

Just two months into his term, 12-term incumbent Rep. David Scraggs retired from Congress, and Mark decided to again roll the dice. He won. And in an unplanned but fitting twist of fate, Mark entered the House in 1999 alongside his cousin Tom, where the two have served since.

Udalls storm the Senate

The Udalls have carried on the conservationist legacy of their fathers, a cause they wear on their (rolled-up) sleeves.

Mark, who co-chairs the House Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus and sits on the Natural Resources Committee, thinks that America is on the cusp of a “green revolution.” He crafted legislation to protect many of Colorado’s wilderness areas and helped turn the former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant into a wildlife refuge. Tom, as New Mexico attorney general, created the state’s first environmental enforcement division and has led efforts to preserve the Valle Vidal in northern New Mexico for public access.

The environment isn’t the Udalls’ only issue. Both voted against the 2002 legislation that gave President Bush the authority to go to war in Iraq (although Colorado antiwar activists have criticized Mark more recently for his votes to continue funding). Both voted against the Patriot Act—two of only 66 representatives to do so. And both are pro-choice in states where that stance can be a political liability.

The two speak at length about consensus building, but when the chips fall, they aren’t afraid to vote their conscience. “They really believe in civility,” says Bracy, “but these are tough customers. They never blink when they make up their minds.”

They will need to show some of that toughness this fall when their Senate cam-

paigns hit full stride. Mark is hoping to replace the retiring Wayne Allard, who is honoring a 1996 pledge to serve no more than two terms. In what will be one of the tightest races nationwide, he will square off against Bob Schaffer, a former U.S. representative who narrowly lost the 2004 Senate primary to beer baron Pete Coors.

Democrats have shined lately in Colorado, but many newly elected legislators, including Sen. Ken Salazar, represent the moderate wing of the party. Schaffer, in an attempt to sway independent voters, is painting Udall as a “Boulder liberal.” But it’s the Republican who may be out of touch with state residents.

While Udall was safeguarding the environment, Schaffer spent time in the House cozying up to Big Oil. A major supporter of the Bush-Cheney energy plan, he accepted more than \$75,000 in donations from the oil and gas industry while in office. Schaffer now serves as an executive at Aspect Energy, which, according to the League of Conservation Voters, develops international oil and gas opportunities, including in Iraq, and pursues coal-based investments at the expense of clean energy. He also opposes abortion and same-sex marriage, which he campaigned hard against in 2004. And he is a supporter of the Iraq War.

Election analysts think Colorado’s recent Democratic upswing gives Udall a slight edge, but the polls remain tight. A February Rasmussen poll showed Schaf-

fer ahead 44 percent to 43 percent.

Things look easier in New Mexico, where Tom is vying for the seat long-held by Republican Sen. Pete Domenici, who is retiring after six terms because of a medical condition. The Democrat initially decided against running but changed his mind in November after receiving a flood of grassroots support, exemplified by a neotrots-led “Draft Udall” campaign.

He’ll face one of New Mexico’s other two representatives, Republicans Heather Wilson or Steve Pearce. Wilson, the only female veteran ever elected to Congress, is under investigation by the House Ethics Committee over her alleged role in the firing of U.S. Attorney David Iglesias. Pearce, a strong supporter of tougher border regulation and tax cuts, is more conservative than many New Mexico Republicans.

Against either candidate, early polling shows the well-funded Udall as a huge favorite. A February survey from New Mexico State University found Udall leading Pearce by 22 percentage points and Wilson by 28 percentage points.

The Republican side of the tree

Gordon Smith, unlike his second cousins Tom and Mark, is already in the Senate—he just has to fight to stay there. A two-term senator in Oregon, Smith traces his lineage back to David King, but he falls on the Republican side of the tree. Smith’s grandfather Jesse Udall succeeded his brother Levi on the Arizona Supreme Court, and Smith’s father Milan Dale Smith was assistant secretary of agriculture during the Eisenhower administration.

Smith has crafted an image as an independent legislator eager for bipartisan solutions. A member of the moderate Republican Main Street Partnership, he has voted to fund stem-cell research, sought to include gays in hate crimes legislation and opposed oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In December 2006, he even turned against the Iraq War, suggesting on the Senate floor that Bush’s war policy “may even be criminal.”

But Oregon Democrats argue Smith is more a Bush than a Rockefeller Republican, a problem for the only Republican holding statewide office in the largely blue state. Smith is pro-life and supported the



Cousins Tom (left) and Mark (right) Udall, both U.S. representatives, are running for the Senate in their respective states.

COURTESY OF THE MARK UDALL CAMPAIGN

2003 Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, voted against raising the minimum wage and was a crucial advocate for racially insensitive Sen. Trent Lott's (R-Miss.) 2006 return to a leadership position in the chamber.

Portland-area activist Steve Novick and Oregon House Speaker Jeff Merkley are the front-runners for the Democratic nomination, and either would present a diffi-

filibuster, a Senate rule that guarantees 40 senators can refuse to end debate on a proposed bill. Currently, the only way to block a filibuster is if 60 senators invoke cloture, a maneuver that, historically, has been required only sparingly. But according to a study by the progressive strategy center Campaign for America's Future (CAF), Republicans are on pace to force 134 clo-

of labor struggles (the 1914 Ludlow massacre) and blue-collar populism. Albeit timidly, Westerners are reconnecting with that history and revolting against economic policies that have funneled wealth upward without regard for the well-being of working people. The electoral backlash against Colorado's failed Taxpayer Bill of Rights amendment—which would have

BY TAKING HARD LINES ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES, THE REPUBLICAN PARTY HAS ALIENATED MANY WESTERN VOTERS.

cult and progressive challenge to Smith. The incumbent will enter the campaign with a substantial cash advantage, but the national party should mitigate some of that edge, especially if Merkley, who has the support from the party establishment, were to win the primary on May 20.

Democratic gains

The possibility of three Udall family senators is intriguing, but the races gain more significance in light of the Democrats' electoral prospects this cycle. As blogger Chris Bowers wrote at his strategy website OpenLeft, "It is becoming difficult to believe the number of potential Republican-held Senate seats Democrats have a reasonable chance of capturing in 2008."

Democratic challengers are polling well against Republican incumbents in Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Virginia. With an enormous cash advantage over the National Republican Senate Committee—a difference of \$17 million, at the end of 2007—the Democratic Party could widen its diminutive Senate majority.

For many on the left, that can't come soon enough. The GOP has brazenly deterred progressive legislation with a tactic best articulated by Minority Whip Lott: "The strategy of being obstructionist can work or fail," he told *Roll Call* last April, "and so far, it's working for us. Democrats are the ones taking the blame for not getting anything done."

Republicans have thwarted majority-backed bills by repeatedly threatening to

ture votes by the end of this Congress, more than double the historical average.

"There had never been a previous congressional minority," says Bob Borosage, CAF's co-director, "that had so systematically used the threat of filibuster and had used it on basic bread and butter issues and on fundamental questions like the war."

But that problem fades away if Democrats can assemble veto-proof majorities with the help of more Blue senators.

"If you pick up six seats," says Borosage, "you can pick up enough Republicans on almost everything over a 60-vote margin."

Of all the necessary pickups, Democrats are most optimistic about the Udall races because of the party's recent success in the interior west. In 2000, Republicans held an eight-state gubernatorial monopoly along the Rocky Mountains. Today, Democrats inhabit the governor's mansion in five of those states. Democrats have also picked up two senate seats (Salazar's 2004 win in Colorado and Jon Tester's 2006 win in Montana), five House seats and several state and local offices. It's no coincidence the Democratic National Convention this summer will be held in Denver.

By taking hard lines on social and economic issues, the GOP has alienated independent-minded Western voters. Its emphasis on wedge "values" issues like abortion and gay marriage hasn't played well in the West, a region Mark Udall says has a "libertarian live-and-let-live attitude" about citizens' personal lives.

The interior West also has a rich legacy

required a popular vote for tax increases—and Jon Tester's populist 2006 Senate victory typify this development.

But the most significant asset for Democrats has been Westerners' affinity for clean, open spaces. "In the West, two competing strains of thought have been at war with each other," says Bracy. "One is exploit and development mineral resources at any cost and the other is conservation."

Democrats have capitalized on the region's desire for smart growth by promoting environmental regulation, alternative energy policies and public transit. In doing so, they've picked up support from historically conservative constituents, such as hunters and fisherman.

Tom and Mark should benefit immensely from Westerners' growing dissatisfaction with Republican orthodoxy. But that prompts the question: Who are they rooting for in Oregon?

"In one of these many election campaigns in Arizona in the old days, there was a Goldwater running as a Democrat and an Udall running as a Republican," Mark says. "And the debate in the Udall family, who were Democrats, was do we support the Goldwater or do we support the family member who is a Republican? The ultimate decision ... was to support the Republican Udall—because blood is thicker than Goldwater."

He laughs before he cautions that he doesn't want to "telegraph" where his loyalties lie. But it's clear that family, like public service, is valued among the Udalls. ■



Reliance on food pantries has grown in Alvadore, Ore., as well as in other small towns across the country.

BY SASHA ABRAMSKY, PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

BLUE COLLAR, BARE CUPBOARDS

ALVADORE, ORE.—TEN MILES OUTSIDE Eugene in west central Oregon, little wooden houses and mobile homes make up the town of Alvadore. The homes are too far apart to give the town—population 1,358—the appearance of a city, yet too close together for it to come off as true countryside. Old, domestically manufactured cars line the streets, as well as a few rundown mom-and-pop convenience stores.

Small farmers, mill workers and construction people live here. And they work hard—or at least they do when they can get employment. There's a dry nuts and prunes plant just outside town, as well as a Country Coach facility that manufactures motor homes. Many of the residents hold down several jobs to make ends meet. Yet for an increasing number of people in Alvadore, getting a paycheck—or even several paychecks—is not the same as earning enough to put food on the table.

Schools throughout the counties of central Oregon, the state's hunger belt, report that kids come to classes hungry on Mondays—and endure the long summer vacation months when no

free school lunches exist.

Alvadore, like many dilapidated towns in modern-day America, is at the wrong end of an array of economic changes—from globalization to higher energy costs—and many of its citizens are falling through the social safety net. The result: increased hunger.

Payday loans and food boxes

Many of the town's residents turn to the corner of 8th and B Streets, where the large wooden Alvadore Christian Church stands. On the fourth Thursday of each month, a sign is staked in the churchyard: Food Pantry.

During the winter months, around 40 families show up to receive bread, muffins, applesauce, canned soups, canned vegetables and other staples. In the summers the number of families served increases.

In one corner of the church is a table of food provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The rest—the vast majority—comes from donations by the local community. It's a model that works during flush times, but it isn't a particularly

effective way of feeding the hungry during down times, when more people are struggling to make ends meet and fewer are able to donate food to charity.

Becky Darnall, 34, volunteers at the pantry and also relies on the food boxes from it. She says that when the pantry first opened two years ago, “we had 26-to-28 families. Within the last six months, it’s gone up to 40.”

Becky’s husband is a cook at a restaurant in nearby Springfield. In 2006, he earned \$24,000. Last year, \$27,000. This year, with a pay raise, he hopes to earn \$30,000. As for Becky, she works part time as house-help for one of her neighbors, which brings in \$8 an hour.

They have three kids, are raising a nephew and are living in a 30-year-old mobile home with a leaky roof and dubious electrical wiring. They drive an old Chevy Blazer with a malfunctioning engine that they cannot afford to repair, and that reduces the vehicle’s fuel efficiency to a ludicrous—and prohibitively expensive—seven miles per gallon. Becky’s husband spends \$15 per day just driving to and from work.

Until this year, the family was unable to afford co-payments on the health insurance offered through her husband’s work. As a result, the Darnalls were saddled with \$1,000 in emergency room bills when Becky came down with asthmatic bronchitis last year. The bills got sent to a collection agency, and the family is now struggling to pay them off. This past November, Becky’s husband needed an MRI, which landed the family with an additional \$1,200 to pay off.

“We can get by,” Becky says cautiously, “but the difference between volunteering [at the church] and not is vegetable soup with macaroni thrown in. ... It’s more like a real dinner.”

Before she started coming to the pantry, she says her family jumped through hoops to qualify for food stamps, and still ended up with hardly enough food to survive. “There were a few times it was really tight. But we got by.”

At first, Becky says, they borrowed from friends. Then they started borrowing against their future income. “The payday loan thing, which is a nightmare,” she says, referring to the practice many low-income

Americans have resorted to in recent years of borrowing against their paychecks in order to make it through the last days of the pay period. It’s an exploitative—and usurious—financial trap that, over the years, has contributed to the economic crippling of America’s poor.

“It took us almost a year to get out of it,” Becky acknowledges. “But with-

es and freezers—serves as a distribution point for Gleaners.

Her friend Roberta Coulter chips in. Without Gleaners, she explains, “I’d probably lose a lot of weight. They help me very much. Without them, I could make the JELL-O but I wouldn’t have the fruit.”

And they are the lucky ones.

Of the nearly 40 million who fear go-

After 17 years of marriage, only in the last year has the Darnall family had to decide, month to month, which bills to pay and which services will get shut off.

out it, we’d have been S.O.L.,” she says, laughing bitterly.

The Darnalls have been married 17 years, but only in the last year have they had to decide, month to month, which bills to pay and which services will get shut off.

“And my husband’s worked the whole time,” Becky says. “We didn’t sit back and live off the system.”

JELL-O, but no fruit

Across America, close to 40 million people are listed as being “food insecure,” according to the USDA. That means that even if they don’t actually go hungry, they constantly worry about how to put food on the table.

The Darnalls fit this category. So, too, does 83-year-old widow Helen Wagy, a retired laundress who worked for 35 years and now receives \$912 a month in Social Security—her entire retirement income. Wagy lives in a mobile home in the town of Corvallis, Ore. She gets boxes of food from a group known as Gleaners that gathers unpicked produce from local fields and persuades supermarkets to donate produce that is damaged or has exceeded sell-by dates.

“I have rent to pay, electricity to pay, telephone to pay and the luxury of a TV to pay,” Wagy says, bundled in a fleece jacket and purple trousers, as she sits in a chilly wooden building owned by the city’s park department, in a little park off the highway. The building—not much more than a shack crammed with fridg-

ing hungry, an estimated 11 million-plus Americans occasionally miss meals, according to the USDA. They include many adults in a family who sacrifice their own portions to ensure their children are fed.

In most countries, such people would be defined as being “hungry.” Bush’s America uses a more Orwellian term.

In 2006, the USDA instructed government agencies to no longer refer to this group as being hungry. The change came about after a Committee on National Statistics of the National Academies reported it could not conclusively determine whether people who couldn’t afford to buy food actually experienced “discomfort, illness, weakness or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation.”

As a result, the 11 million Americans who cannot afford to stock their houses with food are now classified as experiencing “very low food security.”

In the decades since the Great Depression of the 1930s, this category would have been made up largely of the long-term unemployed, the homeless, perhaps the mentally ill and other marginalized groups.

These days, however, increasingly it is the working poor—whose wages have stagnated, whose cost of living has gone up with higher gas, food and healthcare expenses, and whose time is now spent standing in line at food banks.

A 21st century depression

Over the past decade, the percentage of food bank clients in Oregon who are



'We can get by,' Becky Darnall says cautiously, 'but the difference between volunteering [at the church] and not is a vegetable soup with macaroni thrown in.'

members of a family with at least one person employed has gone from 30 percent to 47 percent—an increase that translates into tens of thousands of Oregon families.

But this problem is not exclusive to Oregon, where the local economy has been decimated by the collapse of the timber industry, and the threat of going to bed hungry absent the aid of food charities is constant.

Throughout the United States, a startlingly raw form of poverty has entrenched itself within the bottom tier of the economy. In Appalachia, where hunger has never been far from the surface, states such as Virginia and Tennessee continue to see high levels of hunger.

In parts of Texas, especially border regions dotted with the *colonias* of immigrant populations, food insecurity swells.

In a belt of rural counties in eastern New Mexico and western Oklahoma, empty bellies are endemic, as they are in in California's San Joaquin Delta, one of the most fertile agricultural centers in the world.

A decade ago, Oregon had the highest level of hunger of any state. So, the state government got serious about the problem, channeling resources to help poor Oregonians access the federal food stamp program and encouraging an expansion of private food charities.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski, who set up a Hunger Relief Task Force after taking office, went so far as to live on food stamps for a couple weeks, limiting his food expenditure to \$21 per week (or \$1 per meal), the average amount allotted per food stamp recipient in the state, as a public relations gimmick intended to focus attention on the problem.

"It was an incredible challenge for us," says Erinn Kelley-Siel, the governor's human services adviser. "Too many Oregonians are having to rely on food banks to supplement emergency needs and are relying on food stamps as primary sources of food."

Oregon's numbers improved, but they did so mainly through a reduction in hunger in the big cities. In rural areas like Benton County, the problem grew worse.

In 2000, the state classified 11.2 percent of rural residents as being "food insecure." Four years later, that number had grown to 13.6 percent of all rural residents.

But after years of overall progress, the return of economic hard times means that hunger statewide has started to edge up once again, following a path seen in almost every state in the country.

In two of the hardest hit counties, Linn and Benton, food bank workers estimate that 42,000 people received food boxes

in 2007. And, unlike the Portland metro area to the north, these counties have small populations.

Statewide, 11.9 percent of Oregonians are now classified as being "food insecure." Nationally, the figure is 11.4 percent. Surveys by food banks and food pantries consistently find that high utility bills, gas prices and healthcare costs, along with job loss and inadequate food stamp coverage, are pushing more and more working Americans into reliance on private food charities. Volunteers' anecdotes back up these findings.

Yet even as the need has grown, federal government has drastically cut both funding and food contributions to food banks. In 2000, food banks nationwide received \$250 million in federal funds through Title IV of the farm bill. Today, that number is \$140 million.

A generation ago, at the high watermark of USDA subsidies for food banks, 90 percent of the food these organizations received came from the federal government. These days a food bank such as Oregon's huge FOOD for Lane County storage facility, based out of a strip mall a couple miles from downtown Eugene, receives only 12 percent of its food from the feds.

An hour's drive to the north, in the town of Corvallis, the falloff in federal aid has been even more dramatic. As recently as 1987, 85 percent of the food received, and distributed, by the Linn-Benton County Food Share came from the USDA. In 2008, that number is 6 percent, says Ryan McCambridge, director of the Linn-Benton County Food Share, in the central Oregon city of Corvallis.

"We make up the difference and the shortfall by literally begging it from our communities—local businesses, farmers, food drives, grocery stores. Everyone and anyone," says Denise Griewisch, FOOD for Lane County's executive director. It is, she explains, akin to a "voluntary tithe" on the local population.

Farmers, Griewisch notes, are producing less food, as they divert more land to growing corn for biofuels, meaning that, since 2003, the government has been able to purchase less surplus. What food is produced is now costing more and is often ending up on the export market, snapped

up by consumers in other countries with their own food production shortfalls.

To add a final twist, new computer programs allow supermarkets to calculate inventory more effectively, which means that supermarkets have less excess produce to donate to food pantries.

Statewide, the Oregon Food Bank has seen its supply of food dwindle by 3 million pounds a year since 2005, according to its Chief Executive Officer Rachel Bristol. As a result, the size of food boxes is being cut in some locations, down from a five-to-seven day supply to a mere three days.

This past year, says Griewisch, food contributions to FOOD for Lane County were down in every donation category. And that's a problem, given that 3 percent to 5 percent of Lane County's 338,000 residents eat a food box meal on any given day, according to the organization's estimates, and 20 percent of county residents are food insecure at some point during the year.

"For a lot of folks, the emergency food box system was set up to respond to family emergencies," says McCambridge of the Linn-Benton County Food Share. "Over the last eight to nine years, instead of emergencies, people are relying on food boxes to a greater extent. It's really becoming a supplement to incomes. The biggest demographic is folks who have jobs and can't make enough to make ends meet."

When illness means no paycheck

Juan Cortez-Villa is a 30-year-old father of four, who lives in Eugene and works full time in a local wheat-packaging mill. Before that, he worked at another mill, in Medford. He wears a puffy gray jacket to protect himself from the winter cold, a white baseball cap, jeans and heavy boots. On his face is a thin goatee.

Juan earns \$13.25 per hour, and, after taxes, brings home \$1,800 per month. His income places the family above the poverty line. But between the money he sends back to his mother in Mexico, the rent, his utility bills and soaring medical expenses, Juan has found it harder to stay afloat. At the end of every month, there's always a shortfall.

Juan would need "\$15, \$16 an hour" to overcome the gap, he explains through a translator in a community center in Eu-

gene known as Centro.

Since the rent and utility bills must be paid, his family regularly goes short on food. When he's gotten sick and had to take unpaid leave from the mill, the family has ended up with nothing.

"I was unable to do anything," he says, "get any help. Some person gave me a

'Over the last eight to nine years, people are relying on food boxes to a greater extent. The biggest demographic is folks who have jobs but can't make ends meet.'

phone number to this place [Centro]. I had no food for eight days, with my sons and wife." He pauses, and qualifies his statement. "Just a little food. A friend gave me eggs, tortillas. I felt sad for myself, was crying. It's bad for my family. I was scared because I didn't know how to look for help."

Immigrants, mainly Latino, make up 4.6 percent of Lane County's population, and more than one-quarter of Latinos in the county live at, or below, the poverty level.

Statewide, according to the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, nearly half of Latino adults experience food insecurity. Throw in a medical emergency, and all the ingredients are present for people to go hungry.

Buddy, can you spare a dime?

At the Catholic Community Services center in the working-class town of Springfield, a 15 minute drive from Eugene, you can see a line snaking outside the one-time church on any given Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning.

Young and old, male and female, they wait patiently for the doors to open and for staff members to place their names into a database. Then they enter the food pantry and fill their boxes with whatever food has been donated that week.

"On a slow day, we'll serve 80-to-100 people," says Joe Softich, 61, the church's food program manager. "Toward the end of the month, I expect to do at least 140 families, maybe 180."

Softich is a skinny, gray-haired man, his somewhat gaunt face covered by a thick beard. He grew up in a grocery store in

the copper-company town of Anaconda, Mont., studied microbiology, Russian and religion in college in the '60s, and decided long ago that feeding the hungry was his calling in life.

He shows me freezers full of meat and vegetables, boxes of beans and fruit, peanut butter and cartons of milk. "We see

so much need. You hear these stories day after day. You need something to sustain you beyond feeling good about what you do. It's a delicate thing, to be able to help in a way that isn't demeaning."

Softich estimates that 13,330 Springfield residents received food from Catholic Community Services last year.

"We ran out of food three days ago," says Angela Oliver, 38, a one-time drug addict who got clean and recently moved back from Washington State to Oregon to live with her sister and her sister's four children. "We have a few things in the freezer meat-wise, but I'm pretty much a vegetarian," she says. "We have no milk for the little ones, no vegetables, no bread."

Three of the four children get free lunches from school, Oliver says, and the fourth, the youngest, lives with her grandmother. "The kids don't go hungry. They eat before I do, [but] there wasn't seconds. There was just enough for everyone." She adds: "If there was no food bank, I honestly don't know what I would do. We couldn't even scrounge dimes up right now."

To be poor in America has never been easy. But to be poor in Bush's America is devastating. The federal government has turned its back on—and has made it clear it doesn't take responsibility for—those who are unable to make it on their own. ■

SASHA ABRAMSKY is a freelance journalist and the author of the recently published *American Furies: Crime, Punishment and Vengeance in the Age of Mass Imprisonment* (Beacon). He is also a senior fellow of democracy at Demos, a New York-based think tank.

beyond propaganda

Oil giant BP greenwashes Alberta tar sands

BY MICHAEL MORECI

IN 1997, AFTER BRITISH Petroleum publicly acknowledged the harmful effects of global warming, it quickly became known as the oil company with environmental virtue.

While other oil corporations argued that climate change didn't exist—most notably Exxon Mobil, which funded around 40 public policy groups that disputed the scientific grounds for global warming—BP was investing in emission reductions, going so far as to support the Kyoto Protocol, the international agreement established to curb greenhouse gases, which took effect in 2005.

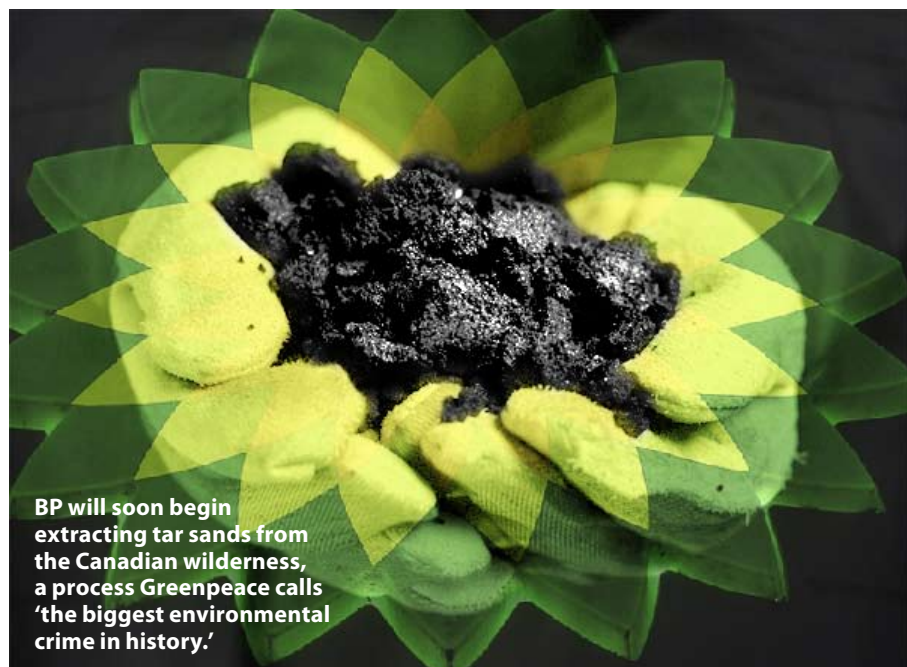
In 2005, BP Alternative Energies announced it would manage an investment program in solar and wind technologies, one that could amount to \$8 billion over seven years. The company also marketed itself as an environmentally friendly oil corporation dedicated to moving “beyond petroleum.”

But a recent change in corporate policy threatens that green-friendly image. It's a policy that Greenpeace calls “the biggest environmental crime in history.”

The policy involves BP breaking its long-standing, self-imposed ban on the production of crude oil from tar sands—which are a combination of clay, sand, various minerals and bitumen—found in the Canadian wilderness.

The process of extracting and refining tar sands—also known as Canadian crude—involves strip-mining a 50,000-square-mile span of forest (approximately the size of Florida) located in the western Canadian province of Alberta. The region contains an estimated 175 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

BP's decision to tap into the Canadian wilderness is “based on addiction, not reality,” says Ann Alexander, senior attorney



BP will soon begin extracting tar sands from the Canadian wilderness, a process Greenpeace calls 'the biggest environmental crime in history.'

at the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC), a nonprofit environmental group. “Tar sands crude oil is dirty from start to finish. It's bad enough that [BP is] fouling our natural resources here in the Midwest, but it's completely destroying them up in Canada. There are good sources of energy we can turn to that don't involve turning entire forests into a moonscape.”

For oil corporations hoping to extract crude from the area, access is often a major hurdle. Bitumen is thick, which means tar sands can't be pumped from the ground the same way traditional oil is. Tar sands need to be mined, and the deeper they are beneath the earth's surface, the more difficult—and harmful—the extraction.

In Alberta's case, nearly 80 percent of the oil lays so deep underground that it needs to be either injected with steam or put through a “fireflood” process, which introduces compressed air to the bitu-

men and burns the oil for better flow. To extract a single barrel of bitumen from tar sands requires an energy input of 250 cubic feet of natural gas.

The first step, then, involves razing vast amounts of wilderness for open-pit mining—meaning that small plants, trees and topsoil must be extracted by the ton. And because five barrels of water are typically needed to produce a single barrel of crude, surrounding rivers must be routed to the pits, then re-routed to man-made lakes of toxic sludge.

But the leveling of the Canadian wilderness is only the beginning. Once the forest and wildlife are out of the way and the pits have been dug, the raw process of extraction requires substantial manpower, heavy machinery (some of which can be up to three stories tall and weigh as much as a jetliner) and an incredible amount of energy. And that's to produce

only a single barrel of unrefined crude oil from two tons of tar sands.

Also, because of the machinery involved, tar sand extraction generates up to four times more carbon dioxide than conventional drilling. Over the next seven years, global warming pollutants released into the atmosphere from tar sands oil production are projected to quintuple to 126 megatons, up from 25 megatons in 2003, according to the Pembina Institute, a nonprofit environmental group based in Canada.

What's more, the tar sands industry consumes enough gas in a single day to heat approximately 4 million American homes, according to the NRDC.

Yet none of these estimates has deterred BP from going forward with a plan to produce 200,000 barrels of Canadian crude per day over the next 15 years.

Tar sand boom

One of the biggest hurdles in combating the Albertan tar sand boom is Canada's lack of environmental standards and regulations. Canada doesn't have a Clean Air Act like the United States does, only guidelines. And even the guidelines the national government has in place can be circumvented by powers granted to each province. The Albertan government, in fact, has openly stated that it is not in line with the Kyoto Protocol, a direct rebuff to Canada's national pledge.

The question then raised, says Melanie Nakagawa, attorney for the NRDC's International Program, is "should the provinces have authority over global warming emissions?"

Currently, 16 percent of American oil imports comes from Alberta. And with corporations such as BP, Royal Dutch Shell and Exxon already committed to investing \$125 billion in imports from Alberta over the next 20 years, that percentage will only increase. Of the 1.25 million barrels extracted daily from the sands, 1 million of it goes directly to the United States. By 2020, that number could be as high as 5 million, according to the NRDC.

"Canadian crude is simply the absolute wrong direction," the NRDC's Alexander says. "If you look at the new technology we have regarding much cleaner resources, we should decide what is best.

That is not Canadian crude. It's destructive on every level."

Perched along Lake Michigan

Once crude is extracted from the tar sands, it still needs to be refined before it can be used. For the most part, that refinement takes place in the United States—and creates another set of envi-

ronmental hazards in the process.

In Whiting, Ind., where one of BP's refineries is perched along Lake Michigan's shores, the company is undergoing a \$3.8 billion expansion that will allow it to refine crude oil originating from Canadian tar sands. The expansion, which will be completed by 2011, will allow BP to refine 260,000 barrels of Canadian crude per day, triple its current capacity.

Canadian crude contains more sulfur and carbon than traditional oil. According to Simon Dyer, oil sands program director and policy director for the Pembina Institute, this means that the process of refining heavier oil has the potential to release up to four times more greenhouse gases.

In a Nov. 30 statement, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) alleged that the BP refinery in Whiting made equipment modifications that resulted in a significant increase in sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and carbon monoxide emissions. All are ozone-depleting chemicals that BP, according to its website, is working to reduce "before it is required by international and national obligations."

The EPA stated that in 2006, BP made modifications to the fluidized catalytic cracking unit at its Whiting plant. Developed in 1942 by Exxon, this unit converts heavier oil, such as crude, into lighter, more valuable products like gasoline and naphtha (a mixture used as feedstock for producing high octane gas).

These allegations come at a time when the Indiana Department of Environmen-

tal Management (IDEM) is reviewing the company for an update to its air emissions permit. (BP has sought higher thresholds in the amount of pollutants it releases.)

The review has drawn comparisons to the controversial water permit that IDEM issued to BP in summer 2007. According to IDEM Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Air Quality Dan

Tar sands extraction reveals a simple truth: when it comes to 'being green,' even the most publicly boastful of the oil corporations will keep their promises only as far as their bottom line allows.

Murray, as was the case with the water permit, the air permit renewal is a reflection of the Whiting expansion.

BP has already withdrawn from IDEM's proposed Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permit, which would have forced BP to take expensive steps to reduce emissions. If BP had accepted the PSD permit, it would have been required to install the latest pollution control technology and prove that its upgrades would not harm the environment.

The NRDC's Alexander has seen these methods before. The water permit that IDEM granted BP made Indiana's anti-degradation laws almost meaningless, she says. And backing off the PSD permit could mean BP has some new tricks up its sleeves.

"It's in BP's interest to get around the need for a PSD permit," Alexander says. "They can potentially accomplish that either with real emissions reductions or with funny math."

Tar sands extraction isn't just another hurdle for environmentalists to combat. It merely reveals a simple truth: when it comes to "being green," even the most publicly boastful of the oil corporations—such as BP—will keep their promises only as far as their bottom line allows. Without action, it's empty rhetoric.

As the world continues to crawl toward environmental sustainability, tar sands extraction, says Nakagawa, is "scraping the bottom of the barrel to get our energy needs." ■

Shape Up and Ship Out

How the Pentagon can cut the military budget and still keep us safe

BY JOHN CAVANAGH, ANITA DANCs AND MIRIAM PEMBERTON

A YEAR AFTER FORMER DEFENSE Secretary Donald Rumsfeld resigned, someone dumped at the *Washington Post's* door an avalanche of his “snowflakes”: his term for the multiple memos he circulated within the Pentagon during his tenure.

One flake in particular rises to the top of this heap. In April 2006, Rumsfeld advised staffers to respond to the growing calls from retired generals for his resignation in this way: “Talk about Somalia, the Philippines, etc. Make the American people realize they are surrounded in the world by violent extremists.”

Goosing fear with menacing—and vague—portraits of global terrorist threats has worked remarkably well to buttress the Bush administration's militarized foreign policy, especially since 9/11. This policy, as enshrined in the current National Security Strategy and articulated by National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, is based on the “ability to act militarily anytime, anywhere to defend our global interests.”

Though fear remains a powerful force in American politics, large majorities of

Americans are no longer buying what the administration is selling. They are no longer equating the presence of violence-minded groups in Somalia and the Philippines with the idea of an America “surrounded in the world by violent extremists.” According to a Pew Research Center study, one-third of Americans believed in 2006 that military force can reduce the risk of terrorism, down from half in 2002.

The budget to finance the administration's military aspiration is larger than any previous budget since the end of World War II. The newest Pentagon request, including war spending, tops \$650 billion—twice what it was, measured in 2007 dollars, in 1960.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was willing to try to match our military spending. Now, no country even thinks of trying. “Half a trillion dollars is more than enough,” says Richard Betts, an adjunct senior fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Yet neither Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Barack Obama (D-Ill.) nor Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) is challenging the need for such a massive global U.S. military

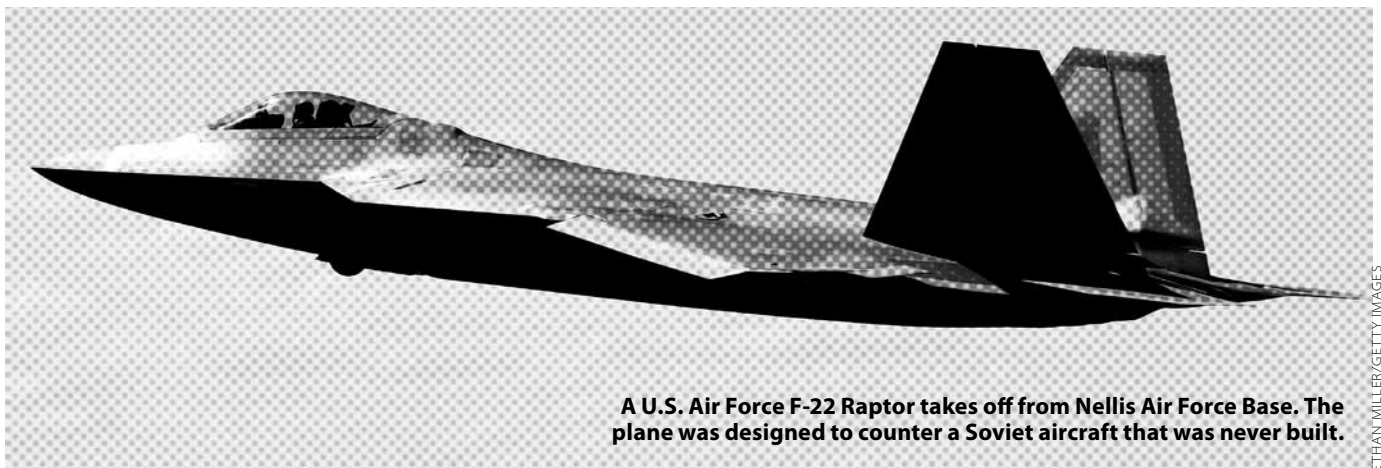
presence—or the budget to pay for it. McCain wants to add 150,000 troops to the overall force, Obama calls for 92,000 more troops and Clinton wants to, as she says, “expand” the military.

The upcoming election is our best chance in years to demand a new foreign policy, one that puts the terrorist threat in proportion and engages the world differently. Under this policy, the military would assume its rightful role as a tool of last resort.

The necessary shifts

As terrorism has replaced the Cold War as the new focus of our foreign policy attention, the United States has neglected four equally urgent security challenges: climate change, nuclear weapons, regional conflicts and growing global inequality. None of these requires a military cure. A foreign policy that refocuses its attention on these challenges would involve major shifts in our foreign policy budget.

A \$213 billion cut in military spending is possible almost immediately, according to a preliminary analysis at our organization, the Institute for Policy Studies. This would include ending the expensive



A U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor takes off from Nellis Air Force Base. The plane was designed to counter a Soviet aircraft that was never built.

ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Iraq occupation, closing many U.S. overseas military bases, eliminating weapons systems that are redundant and economically inefficient, and cutting military assistance to other countries.

First, we must end the immoral and counterproductive Iraq War. A small fraction of the \$99 billion that the United States is likely to spend on the war in 2008 could be used to bring the U.S. troops home.

A larger amount would be needed to help those troops transition into civilian life, similar to the post-World War II GI Bill. To that end, troops brought home from Iraq—as well as from other bases overseas—could be retrained to help create a clean energy and energy-efficient infrastructure in the United States to stave off the disastrous effects of climate change. This kind of investment could generate millions of new jobs retrofitting U.S. buildings and constructing solar, wind and other clean energy infrastructures.

Second, we must cut the sprawling network of U.S. bases around the world, many of which are relics of the Cold War. Today, nearly 700,000 military and civilian personnel are stationed overseas or afloat. Closing just a third of the more than 1,000 overseas facilities would save taxpayers \$45.9 billion—but it's an issue that none of the U.S. presidential candidates dares touch.

Most of these facilities are located in three countries: Germany (302 bases), Japan (111) and South Korea (106). These nations should top the list if, and when, the United States starts the rollback. But we also need to stop the new U.S. Africa Command and close U.S. bases in the Caspian Sea region, where our interests are tied to our fossil-fuel energy past rather than our clean energy future. What's more, shutting down bases would remove targets of anti-Americanism overseas.

Like our allies, who remain secure without a network of bases around the world, the United States should put more foreign policy priority on engaging with other countries culturally, diplomatically and economically.

Third, at least 11 areas of unnecessary weapons spending could be cut from the budget without decreasing U.S. security—saving another \$43.9 billion. These include the F/A-22 “Raptor” fighter jet, which was

originally designed to counter a Soviet aircraft that was never built; the Ballistic Missile Defense, a system that doesn't work for a threat that doesn't exist; and the C-130J transport plane, a costly item that has 168 documented deficiencies that could pose illness, severe injury or death.

Fourth, and finally, we can cut several smaller budget areas that include military

And even after 9/11, the Bush administration continues to shortchange the very programs that experts believe are needed to protect against terrorist threats—such as increased funding for our first responders and public health system. Such improvements would help us deal with other hazards and emergencies, as well.

Major deficiencies in our rail, transit

The United States currently spends nine times more on its military forces than on diplomacy, nuclear nonproliferation, foreign aid and homeland security combined.

assistance to countries that frequently enable human rights abusers, fuel conflicts and strengthen the military of countries at the expense of civil society.

More than \$1 billion, for example, goes toward the so-called “drug war” in Colombia, Bolivia and Peru—roughly 70 percent of which funds military approaches that have increased violence and killings, yet done nothing to decrease the drug trade.

Shortchanged

The United States currently spends nine times more money on its military forces than on all other security tools, including diplomacy, nuclear nonproliferation, peacekeeping, foreign aid *and* homeland security put together. And no candidate talking about “change” should be taken seriously unless she or he is serious about doing something about this fact.

The American people know this over-militarized approach has not made them or the rest of the world safer. In an October 2006 Angus Reid poll, 65 percent said the country has been “too quick to get American military forces involved” in conflicts. Instead, the public supports more “preventive” measures. According to a November 2007 World Public Opinion poll, for example, 78 percent of Americans “believe that all countries should eliminate their nuclear weapons” through a well-established international verification system.

Our diplomatic mission requires more resources, particularly to address shortfalls in staffing and to upgrade antiquated information and communications systems.

security procedures and cargo screening also exist, according to the 9/11 Public Discourse Project, the successor organization to the 9/11 Commission. In each case, the main obstacle has been a lack of money.

Writing a new book

In 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down and the world celebrated the end of the Cold War, a number of military experts and U.S. generals suggested that the United States could slash its defense budget without jeopardizing the country's security.

“I've been maintaining for some time now,” former CIA Director William Colby said in 1993, “that our defense budget could safely and modestly be cut to one-half what it was in the later days of the Cold War.” At the time, the military budget stood at \$300 billion.

Fifteen years later, the Cold War is long over and the U.S. military budget has more than doubled—and that's without taking inflation into account.

Voters—Republicans and Democrats alike—have been telling pollsters they want not a modest course correction, not a turned page, but a whole new book. With a new president as the author, let's hope the book rewrites our country's wildly unbalanced security policies. ■

JOHN CAVANAGH directs the nonprofit Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). **ANITA DANCs** is research director of the nonprofit National Priorities Project. **MIRIAM PEMBERTON** is a research fellow at IPS. The three co-authored the “Just Security Budget” chapter of IPS's *Just Security: An Alternative Foreign Policy Framework*.

The Upside of Nationalism

America-first fervor could be the driving force behind economic populism

BY DAVID SIROTA

YOU DON'T NEED TO listen to presidential speeches or watch party attack ads to know that full-throated nationalism is now lodged in the ideological center of American politics. Look at social networking expert Valdis Krebs' January chart to see what we—the royal We—are reading. Krebs amassed data from Amazon.com, examining what other titles buyers of conservative and liberal political books purchased in 2007. Most of this “also bought” data showed buyers of one liberal book buying other liberal books—and conservatives doing the same on their side.

Krebs' chart, which draws a line connecting each “also bought” book, looks like a dumbbell, with two big clusters on the right and left—a cliché of the media's “polarized America” meme. However, right in the middle are two books that both liberals and conservatives purchased: *War on the Middle Class* and *Independents Day* by Lou Dobbs, America's most famous nationalist.

As economic anxiety grips America, the controversial CNN anchor vents history's conservative and liberal expressions of contemporary nationalism—an ideology built around a self-interested, America-first fervor. When Dobbs tilts right, he rails against undocumented immigrants and “broken borders,” tapping into nationalism's law-and-order pride and its xenophobic-tinged desire for cultural stasis that typically spikes during recessions. When he goes populist, he is the only major TV journalist in America to express nationalism's disdain for global economic policies written by, and for, a transnational elite.

As evidenced by his surging ratings, Dobbs reflects powerful mass emotions. And thanks to the presidential election, some of those emotions may forge a political mandate. The key word is “some,”



because the GOP nominee will be Arizona Sen. John McCain. Unlike most congressional Republicans, McCain has shied away from the anti-immigrant edge of today's nationalism, effectively shoving the most extreme immigration positions off the presidential stage, at least in 2008.

Thus, today's nationalistic sentiment will likely crystallize as economic nationalism—good news for progressives.

‘What do we do now?’

As the campaign wends its way through the heartland's crumbling factory towns, the election is pivoting on debates over globalization and economic sovereignty.

Polls from the *Wall Street Journal* and *Fortune* magazine show that voters of both parties have had it with trade policies that they believe help other countries and slash jobs and wages here at home. A February Bloomberg poll found that by two-to-one,

Americans say acquisitions of U.S. companies by other countries' so-called “sovereign wealth” funds have a negative impact on our economy. More than two-thirds said that “allowing foreign investment in U.S. companies gives foreign governments too much control over the U.S. market.”

With blue-collar swing states central to both the nominating and general election contests, the Democratic candidates have responded forcefully to this ferment, sometimes even trampling their own records.

Before the Ohio primary, both Sens. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) were applauded for promising to reform America's trade policy. Clinton, pretending she never supported the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), even held a press conference to feign outrage that anyone would remind the public about her repeated speeches championing NAFTA.

If the Democrats win, they will take the White House thanks to economic nationalism and their ability to amplify it with a populist message. But when the election ends, many who supported that message will be asking the question actor Robert Redford famously asked in *The Candidate*: "What do we do now?"

Specifically, how will rhetorical populism be cobbled into a concrete agenda, and how can economic nationalism be successfully legislated? The answer is in how we trade, tax and spend.

The trade transformation

In the early '90s, economic nationalism spiked. Gallup polls showed almost half of all Americans saw free trade policies as "a threat to the economy."

Around this time, Bill Clinton was campaigning for president on a promise to oppose trade preferences for China and NAFTA until China and Mexico improved their wages, environmental standards and human rights. Meanwhile, Texas billionaire Ross Perot was demanding the government "impose a 'social tariff' at a level equal to the difference between the wage paid in the developing nation and the wage paid in the United States for comparable work."

As the tech boom of the mid-'90s hit, the number of Americans seeing free trade as a threat dipped to about a third, and the Clinton administration used the lull to ram NAFTA and China trade preferences through Congress.

Now, however, Gallup's numbers have returned to early '90s levels. And unlike before, the economy doesn't look ready for a fast recovery. At a bare minimum, today's surge in economic nationalism will likely stop Congress from passing more NAFTA-style agreements. Such a "time out" is not the wave of protectionism that corporate interests claim it is, nor is it any move toward new tariffs, social or otherwise. But stopping the current trade trajectory would be significant progress.

A three-pronged approach

More proactively, a three-pronged package of reforms has a realistic chance of moving forward.

First, a proposal by Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.)

would make new trade agreements harder to pass "unless they are accompanied by a more thorough financial analysis," as the *Washington Post* reported. Their bill would end the practice of flying blindly into the free trade abyss by forcing the government to provide estimates of potential job losses with any trade pact. (That's right—Congress currently makes trade policy without even asking what the consequences are.)

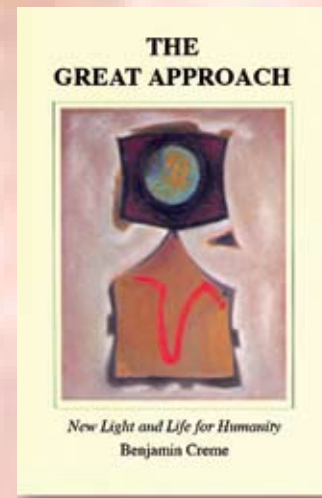
Second, for pacts that do pass, Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) is developing a proposal that would give nonprofit groups and individuals the same enforcement powers that corporations currently enjoy. Ellison floated a truncated version of this concept during the 2007 debate over the Peru Free Trade Agreement, arguing that if a trade deal gives a corporation the right to sue in international courts for enforcement of investor rights (copyrights, patents, intellectual property, etc.), then individuals and advocacy organizations should also have the same right to sue for enforcement of other rights (labor, environmental, etc.). A Democratic administration could incorporate this forward thinking into the core text of any future trade pact.

Finally, there are the concerns about foreign economic influence. The 2006 brouhaha over a Dubai company attempting to buy a group of American ports focused the public's attention on the larger issue of state-owned companies and investment funds buying up large segments of the American economy. Today, these sovereign wealth funds hold \$2.5 trillion in assets, and Morgan Stanley estimates they could hold \$17 trillion within a decade. Many fear that these state-controlled entities, which often operate in secret, could use such assets as a political weapon.

Unlike the typical investor concerned only with the bottom line, foreign governments have agendas beyond making a buck. They could easily push companies to behave in ways that are politically advantageous to the owner country. That nationalist concern has led to congressional hearings, and according to *Financial Week*, some Democratic legislators appear poised to introduce a bill to strengthen the weak regulatory regime that currently oversees these international economic transactions.

Continued on page 47

**The greatest
event
in history
is now
unfolding...**



A group of highly advanced Teachers, who have long guided humanity from behind the scenes, are now returning to the everyday world to help us solve our most critical global problems.

In *The Great Approach*, author Benjamin Creme says these Teachers, led by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are here to inspire us to share the earth's food and resources, to create a sustainable world of justice and peace for all.



Benjamin Creme is the author of 12 books, and chief editor of *Share International* magazine.

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Obamanomics

An energized constituency could push Obama's centrist economic plan to the left

BY DAVID MOBERG

IN FEBRUARY, AS THE battle intensified for the votes of economically anxious blue-collar workers, Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) took his campaign to the dwindling number of American factory floors, pledging to fight for good jobs, fair trade and shared prosperity. Speaking to workers at a General Motors assembly plant in Janesville, Wis., Obama said, "A country in which only a few prosper is antithetical to our ideals and our democracy."

But the economic outlines for a potential Obama administration remain unclear. "Who knows what his economic policies are?" asks one sympathetic economist from a union that has not yet endorsed a candidate. "They seem pretty unformed."

Obama would certainly shift government priorities to improving job prospects and raising living standards for American workers. He proposes raising the minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour, offering refundable \$4,000 tax credits for college, expanding the childcare tax credit, reforming bankruptcy laws, rebuilding infrastructure, establishing a new employee savings plan and investing in alternative energy to create "millions of new green jobs."

Yet even the unions that have endorsed Obama—including most members of Change to Win—have found it hard to differentiate his economic policies from those of Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.)

"I had until recently felt that both Clinton and Obama campaigns were quite economically conservative," says Thomas Palley, a progressive economic consultant and writer. "But the Obama campaign does seem more a work-in-progress and, therefore, more open to influence."

Campaigns often fail to foretell presidential policies. Centrist candidate Franklin Roosevelt shifted to the left. Centrist



Presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) speaks during a town hall meeting in San Antonio, Texas, on March 3.

candidate Bill Clinton shifted to the right.

The candidate's advisers offer limited clues. The *Guardian's* Daniel Koffler tags Obama as a "left libertarian," reflecting the influence of economic advisers like Austan Goolsbee from the University of Chicago—the Vatican of the free market fundamentalists. The work of Obama's advisers suggests that he would rely on marginal tinkering with markets and incentives to try to achieve some progressive ends, such as more equality or opportunity.

Such a strategy would be consistent with what Cass Sunstein, Obama's colleague at the University of Chicago Law School, identifies as Obama's "minimalist" approach to law and politics. As Sunstein argued in *The New Republic*, Obama would be inclined to make modest adjustments in institutions in search of his "visionary" goals.

But the people that a President Obama would pick for his top economic policy

positions would likely be drawn from the Democratic establishment. Wall Street representatives, such as President Clinton's former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, are likely to have a big voice in an Obama administration. They would focus on balanced budgets, a strong dollar, low inflation, a light hand in financial regulation and restraint on spending that might spook traders. "Change," however, might be more likely if Obama tapped more progressive Clinton administration veterans, like Nobel prizewinner Joseph Stiglitz or former Federal Reserve member Alan Blinder.

Subprime plans

When it comes to many of the larger issues hounding the economy, Obama hasn't done much to distinguish himself. He has not been a visionary on the subprime crisis, and his adviser Goolsbee indicated in a *New York Times* column that

the only problem is the rampant fraud that was an integral part of subprime lending. In his proposal to deal with the subprime mortgage debacle, Obama does not support the foreclosure moratorium and interest rate freeze that Clinton and many citizen and labor groups advocate.

But Dean Baker, co-director of the Center on Economic and Policy Research and an early forecaster of housing bubble problems, argues that Obama's plan is admirable because it is less of a bank bailout than Clinton's. The problem now, he points out, is not so much the interest rates that are resetting at a higher level, but that the value of people's houses has declined to less than what they initially paid. Baker advocates guaranteeing people facing foreclosure an option to rent their homes at fair market value. This would avoid many evictions and pressure banks to work out more favorable mortgage agreements.

Obama's main flaw seems to be excessive caution, not favoritism to the financial services industry, which has contributed almost as much to him as it has to Clinton. But Obama is not beyond influence.

Obama's national finance chair is Penny Pritzker. Chicago's wealthy Pritzker family owned half of Superior Bank, a pioneer in subprime lending. When the bank failed in 2001, the family signed a sweetheart deal with federal regulators that let it off with a profit while many depositors lost money. (But Penny's brother, J.B. Pritzker, is a major Clinton supporter.)

And for years, executives of Exelon, the Illinois-based nuclear utility, have been among Obama's biggest contributors. (Obama insists nuclear power should not be ruled out as a potential energy source, even if he also promotes alternatives.)

Trade winds

Even with the departure of Edwards, trade politics remains contentious. This is especially true in Ohio, where Obama scored points with NAFTA critics by taking aim at its provisions that give foreign investors the right to challenge national laws in special trade tribunals.

Obama has promised to incorporate labor and environmental protection in trade deals, although it's hard to tell how steady

fast he would be. Reports about a Canadian consular meeting with Goolsbee raised the issue before the Ohio primary (though Goolsbee repeated Obama's support for new labor and environmental provisions).

Obama argues that globalization is inevitable, but government should "make sure trade works for American workers." His solution emphasizes ending tax

left by the Bush administration without bold action. To make serious economic progress, he will have to end the \$3 trillion war in Iraq—already more expensive in real terms than any conflict except World War II, according to Stiglitz. The subprime financial crisis, which is likely to get worse as the recession deepens, will require re-regulation of financial markets, as well as

Obama provides a distinctly American mix of lofty hopes for the future and nuts-and-bolts pragmatism, but what's lacking is a coherent analysis of how society works.

breaks for companies going overseas (fine, but not likely to change much behavior) and offering tax incentives to companies that create good jobs in the United States (symbolically laudable but ineffective and probably a waste of public funds).

"The upside is [Obama] hasn't dug in on the wrong position, is not surrounded by the Clinton crowd and has a more open view," says Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. "But, on the other hand, it has not been a priority where Sen. Obama has exerted lots of his considerable brain power."

Forces to reckon with

Obama provides a distinctly American mix of lofty hopes for the future, as well as nuts-and-bolts pragmatism. The missing ingredient is a coherent analysis of how society works. Rather than attack corporations, he attacks lobbyists. But corporate power—not corporate lobbyists—should be in question. "We are still at the stage of not quite grappling with the real issue that confronts America, and that issue is the power of the corporations to globalize and to drive the political agenda," says Palley.

If elected president, Obama would face two external forces that could embolden him to take a more progressive stand.

First, any victory will spring from a popular, youth-accented movement that has high hopes and is fired up and ready to go. He may need to heed the advice of Daniel Burnham, the late 19th century Chicago urban planner: "Make no small plans."

Second, Obama can't resolve the mess

an ambitious government investment program to generate growth and job creation.

There's also the fact that wealth and income are more unequally distributed now than at any time in U.S. history since the late 1920s. During the Bush "recovery," the top 1 percent of households captured three-fourths of all new income created. In the last seven years, wages stagnated as productivity grew, and 3 million manufacturing jobs vanished, leaving the average person earning less at the end of the recovery than before the previous recession.

Continued on page 47

The Face of Homeless Chicago

Danielle, 4 years old.



It's not what you think.

www.chicagohomeless.org



BY JACOB WHEELER

Caricaturing Danish Muslims

In early 2006, violence across the Islamic world rocked the quaint Scandinavian country of Denmark after one of its major newspapers, *Jyllands-Posten*, published inflammatory cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad months earlier. The images enraged many Muslims,

some of whom burned Danish flags and embassies to protest the caricatures of their prophet, which Islam forbids from being depicted at all.

One of the 12 caricatures of Muhammad depicted a man with a bomb under his turban—a move presumably designed to provoke debate about Islam's relationship with the West.

Few understand this clash of cultures as well as Asmaa Abdol-Hamid, a Danish immigrant born in the United Arab Emirates to Palestinian parents. The 26-year-old social worker from Odense (the city where writer Hans Christian Anderson was born) ran for parliament last year with the leftist Red-Green Alliance party, but came up short after the right-wing Danish People's Party launched a smear campaign against her. The reason? Abdol-Hamid wears a *hijab* and she chooses not to shake hands with men—even in parliament.

Denmark is home to 5.4 million people, nearly 200,000 of whom are first- or second-generation Muslim immigrants. Though Denmark prides itself as a tolerant and open nation—with a welfare state, socialized medicine and once welcoming immigration policies—many of the country's religious minorities see things differently.

In These Times spoke with Asmaa Abdol-Hamid just days after the infamous caricatures were reprinted in more than

a dozen Danish newspapers, following reports of renewed death threats against the illustrator of the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon, Kurt Vestergaard.

What are the biggest challenges that minorities face in Denmark today?

The biggest challenge for Danish Muslims is to be viewed as equal citizens. What I experienced following the cartoon crisis and the worldwide reactions to them is that young Muslims in Denmark are afraid something awful will happen to them. They are just waiting for their turn, and that's truly scary.

But Muslims in Denmark are Danish citizens. They will live here for the rest of their lives and raise their children here. We have to teach people that they are equal.

Too many people believe that you can't be a Dane and a Muslim at the same time, especially the Danish People's Party. But today, many Danes are connected to Islam. Their religion isn't a barrier to them being good citizens in the Danish community. So we have to view Denmark today in a different light.

The policies promoted by the People's Party clearly perpetuate a genuine ignorance about Muslims in Denmark. It's a dangerous development.

How about your own religious faith as a Danish Muslim woman?

My mother brought my five sisters and brother and me to Denmark from the United Arab Emirates. My father came

later. We lived in a town called Genner, on the rural Danish mainland, where we were the only Muslims in town.

I am religious. The more I learn about Islam, the easier I find it to be a citizen of Denmark, because many of the values are shared. Danish values stem from, or are inspired by, Christian values. Many of those values are universal. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are representative of democratic societies but are also representative of Islam. They merge. I think it's actually easier to be a Muslim in Denmark than it is to be a Muslim in other places, such as the Middle East.

Many think of you as the politician who won't take off her *hijab* or shake hands with men in parliament. What's your response to that?

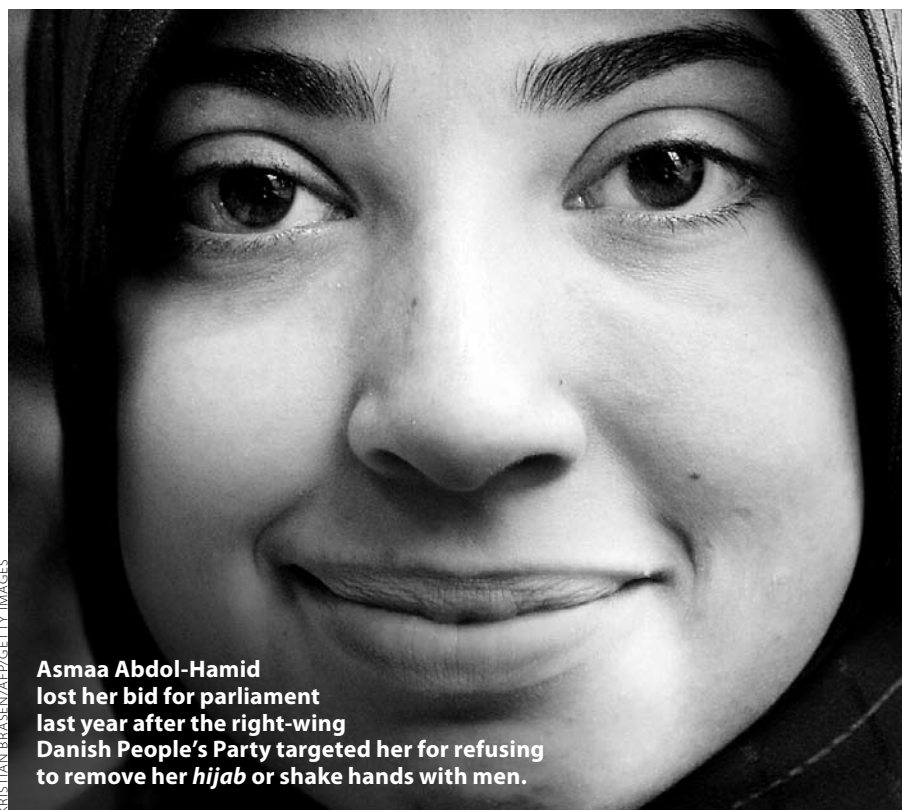
I do greet men, but I do it with my hand on my heart. I do it in a manner that shows them honesty and respect.

When I met Morten Messerschmidt, an incumbent member of the Danish People's Party, for a televised debate, he waited until we were on the air before he extended his hand toward me, saying he wanted to shake my hand, even though he knew I wouldn't do it. I told him that I would greet him with my hand on my heart to show him honesty and respect. You do the same to me, I told him. But he just walked out the door.

What's important is not how we greet each other, but the values we emphasize when we meet.

As to whether I'd take off my *hijab*, it's my personal choice not to. It's my freedom as a woman to wear it, and I won't let myself be intimidated by the right-wing politicians in Denmark—or by primitive men from my own background.

I am a free woman who has the right to decide over my own body and my own



Asmaa Abdol-Hamid lost her bid for parliament last year after the right-wing Danish People's Party targeted her for refusing to remove her *hijab* or shake hands with men.

clothing. I have decided to wear a *hijab*, and in a free democratic society, that choice ought to be respected.

Why didn't you win enough votes to gain a seat in parliament last fall?

When I was asked to run for a parliamentary seat by the Red-Green Alliance party, I accepted because I have many social and political ambitions for Denmark. When I campaign politically, I forget that I'm wearing a *hijab*. That doesn't define who I am; it's just a part of my clothing.

But the way I dress was met with resistance, and I was asked if I would continue to wear the *hijab* if I entered parliament. My answer was, "Of course I will."

On the campaign trail I was asked about my religion and about Muslims in general. Those questions showed me what kind of situation we have in Denmark. When we question those campaigning for parliament on their religion, that reflects a dangerous polarity in a democracy. Democracy is for all people.

Suddenly, there were parliamentary officials in Denmark who wanted me to withdraw from the democratic process because I wear a *hijab*. That only convinced me to insist on my rights as a citizen and

to continue my bid for parliament.

What about the diversity of voters who supported you: radicals, gays, minorities?

The broad group that has supported me has been interesting: citizens from different classes that support my politics, citizens that care about Denmark, citizens that want to resist [Danish People's Party leader] Pia Kjaersgaard and her party.

They included the Red-Green Alliance party class in Copenhagen, as well as many first-time voters—people who have lived in Denmark for many years but never voted in a parliamentary election. I am really happy about that and grateful for their support.

Those who favored my candidacy didn't focus on my religion but on my politics.

You allied yourself with the gay rights movement and enjoyed their support. That would be unthinkable for many devout Christian politicians in the United States.

People's sexual orientation is not important to me. I don't want to enter people's bedrooms and see whom they're sleeping with. It's not my right as a politician or as a Muslim. I can't judge people. As far as I'm concerned, the only one

who can judge people is God.

The Danish left has traditionally focused on class politics and international solidarity, but minority rights have taken a back seat. Is the Danish left now ready for you?

Actually, liberal parties in Denmark have strayed from class wars, and that's what I want us to focus on again. Denmark is one of the richest countries in the world, with an established wealthy class, and yet we're talking about poverty here ... in 2008! That's deeply worrisome.

The ethnic minorities in Denmark now belong to the lower class. They are the new working class for the liberal parties—immigrants who we need to integrate into liberal politics. It's our responsibility to fight for them.

Before the Muhammad cartoons were recently re-published, another Danish politician of Middle Eastern descent, Naser Khader, said that the reaction would be different this time around. What do you think?

I'm getting pretty tired of the cartoon case, to be honest. It's all so unnecessary. If there were threats against Kurt Vestergaard, the primary cartoonist, then those people should see their day in court. But one shouldn't react by punishing all Muslims.

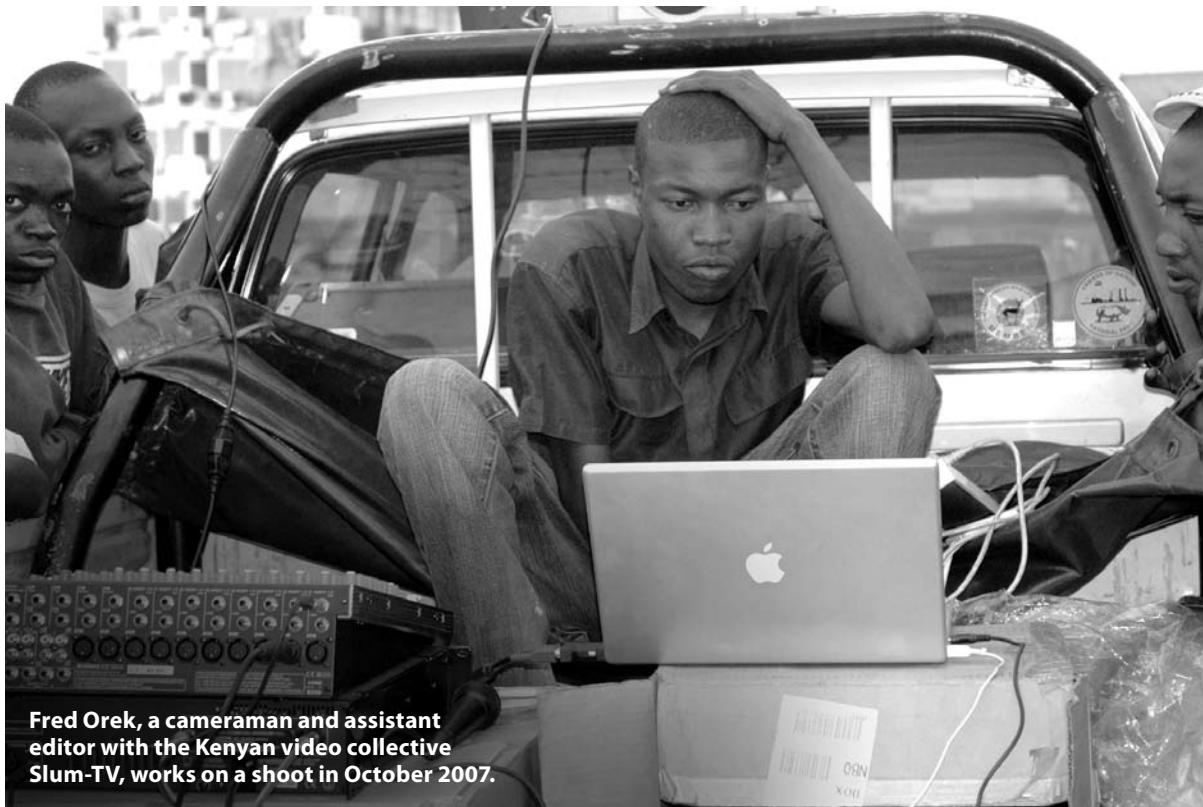
We need to draw the line between freedom of the press and persecution. There's no journalistic rationale for reprinting the cartoons other than a show of solidarity for Vestergaard. It's fine to sympathize with him, but there are other ways to do it.

It's the job of newspapers to print stories, not to teach a lesson to certain groups of people. If my little sister came home from school and said she had picked on the fat girl in class, I wouldn't commend her for using "freedom of expression."

I don't think it was a good idea to republish the cartoons. It's harmful to the Muslim community that we are acting like children in school who resort to a playground mentality.

And it's just not smart for Denmark, given our participation in the war in Iraq and the earlier cartoon crisis.

Now we're doing it again, and casting Denmark in a questionable light, internationally, in the process. ■



Fred Orek, a cameraman and assistant editor with the Kenyan video collective Slum-TV, works on a shoot in October 2007.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SLUM-TV

BY MICHELLE CHEN

Kenya's Indy Media

While news reports across the world have displayed images of chaos shaking Kenya, an alternative media system driven by ordinary Kenyans is emerging in the East African country to help raise the voices of the seldom heard. The

violent aftermath of President Mwai Kibaki's disputed election in December has detonated Kenya's festering ethnic, land and power struggles, leaving hundreds dead and displacing hundreds of thousands. But it has also energized the country's independent media-makers, many of whom see their work as key to overcoming the crisis.

Fusing mass communication with political organizing, the Kenya Independent Media Center (IMC) has aired local activists' perspectives on the violence and its root causes. Through its growing network of independent reporters, IMC Kenya aims to generate "information for action," according to co-founder John Bwakali.

The organization also tries to lead by example

through its non-hierarchical structure as a collective—a potential model of radical self-empowerment in a society besieged by political disillusionment.

In an IMC audio piece, Jimani, a young activist with the Warriors, a Nairobi-based self-help group, reflects on the desperation that has pushed many of Kenya's youth into violent clashes.

"Why has a youth gone out to fight, ready to die?" he asks on a recording produced shortly after the elections. "Is it freedom for those who are oppressed in this world? Maybe you can say so." But he continues: "As a [young] man is ready to go out there and die because he wants his voice to be heard, we need to give them that chance. We need to hear what they have to say to us."

Some youth are amplifying their voices through a video collective called Slum-TV, led by Kenya-based media activists. By documenting everyday struggles in Mathare—a densely populated slum in the capital Nairobi—the project enables young people to produce homegrown media and, through local public screenings, fosters community dialogue. Following the outbreak of the post-election violence, Slum-TV has focused on current recovery efforts that bring together activists from different ethnic groups.

Slum-TV co-founder Sam Hopkins noted the contrast with corporate media's coverage of "tribal" violence. "The idea behind focusing on characters who have crossed the ethnic divide is really just to provide another version of what's happening, to counteract the mainstream international media," he says.

As an ear to the ground in their communities, grassroots media activists have sometimes been ahead of the news.

Patrick Shomba and fellow artists, who founded the Ghetto Film Club media collective in 2006, foreshadowed the approaching unrest in a screenplay titled "The Ghetto President." The film, created last year as a civic-education project, explored issues of corruption, voting rights, youth rights and ethnic conflict. After scraping together volunteer help and borrowed equipment, the group completed the film a few days before the election and held a public screening in a Nairobi slum. Their next film, they hope, will be about reconciliation.

Since cities like Nairobi are ethnically diverse, Shomba views street-level art as a way to "maintain the peace here in the urban sector, with a mix of culture and a mix of tribes."

Local youth lead the project as actors and producers—a rare opportunity for them to overcome marginalization. The group aims to eventually turn media work into a sustainable income source for young people wrestling with poverty, crime and lack of schooling in their communities.

In the post-election turmoil, Shomba is also working with Kenya's budding com-

munity radio scene to air local news, as well as anti-violence messages, on three small urban stations, with an estimated reach of more than 2 million listeners.

"What our guys can do at the grassroots," he says, "the mainstream media can't come and do."

'The media as an institution must be set free so that we as independent journalists can also use that freedom to express an autonomous view of what we believe is true.'

Though still in its infancy, grassroots reporting is gaining traction in Kenya. Since 2007, the Web-based Voices of Africa project, an initiative of the Africa Interactive Media Foundation, has delivered field reporting from mobile-phone-based correspondents in Kenya. Its coverage features video commentary from everyday people on politics, underlying social problems and concerns about the ongoing mediation talks.

Although Kenya's independent media-makers generally do not face outright authoritarian restraints, more insidious barriers can impinge on their work.

IMC Kenya reporter Oscar Odhiambo recently fled Kenya temporarily for Tanzania, in part, he says, because he felt that as an independent journalist, he risked being targeted by violent factions for speaking out. Meanwhile, he says, Kenya's establishment press has failed to hold powerful officials and business elites accountable because it is hampered by corporate control.

"The media as an institution must be set free," he says, "so that we as independent journalists can also use that freedom to express an autonomous view of what we believe is true."

Yet one of the most immediate challenges facing independent media activists is simply logistics. Reflecting the global "digital divide" between North and South, Kenya's online infrastructure is threadbare. Internet users make up less than 10 percent of Kenya's population, according

to international estimates; both media producers and consumers typically lack consistent access. In response, media-makers are repurposing old-school technologies to reach new audiences.

While IMC Kenya runs a website, co-founder Bwakali acknowledged that its

digital material is out of reach for most Kenyans. The key is to capitalize on "good old traditional distribution networks," he says—cassette tapes and compact discs, distributed hand to hand. The group also plans to work with mini-bus operators to air IMC recordings on their daily routes.

For Slum-TV, just the shared experience of a public audience has deep social resonance. "To see the reaction of a crowd when we have a screening is really incredible," says Hopkins. In Mathare, where hundreds of thousands struggle with poverty and political disenfranchisement, "the potential to affect people's aspirations is huge."

Meanwhile, among the small community of wired Kenyans, blogs channel information, outrage and hope.

In January, the blog Kenyan Pundit ran a self-penned "obituary" by writer Simiyu Barasa. "I know not my tribe," he wrote. "I have only known myself as Kenyan, and others as fellow Kenyans. In these times, belonging or not belonging [to a tribe] means not being dead or being seriously dead. What chances does a person like me have?"

While fostering political discussion, Kenya's blogosphere has also taken a proactive role in coping with the crisis. The Web-based mapping project Ushahidi.com tracks citizen-reported violent incidents, along with local peace-building efforts, across the country.

Nairobi-based political cartoonist



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We don't need to tell you what's wrong with the media: just turn on your TV.

Don't we deserve more than Paris Hilton, Bill O'Reilly and Rupert Murdoch?

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Where does change begin?

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GOOD IDEA WHAT'S
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and blogger Patrick Gathara distills pointed dissent into scathing images and commentary. One of his recently posted comics shows Kibaki playing the fiddle and singing as the city behind him blazes in flames.

To help raise consciousness through art, Gathara has worked with the Association of East African Cartoonists (KATUNI) to launch a political cartoon competition, which is themed around the current conflicts and ideas for solutions.

"Involving the Kenyan people in the debate over the future of their country and giving them nonviolent avenues of expression," he says, "is the way out of the current crisis."

As activists look to recast the country's political landscape, IMC Kenya co-founder Bwakali says free media is a critical tool for opening dialogue: "You are telling each and every person that your voice matters, that your opinion can play a key role toward making a difference." ■

MEDIA

Adbusters' Ads Busted

By James H. Ewert Jr.

KALLE LASN is a fighter for the right to communicate. A privilege, says the founder of *Adbusters* magazine, that goes one step farther than the freedom of speech.

"You can stand on the corner and shout at people as they are going by," Lasn says. "But if a handful of corporations have media in their pocket, they can totally hoodwink the public."

From his home in Vancouver, Lasn himself communicates to the masses on the pages of *Adbusters*—a 10-year-old culture-jamming magazine published through the Adbusters Media Foundation.

On Feb. 18, the Supreme Court of British Columbia dismissed a case that Lasn brought forth, which argued that

Canadian TV conglomerate CanWest Global was obligated, under the Canadian Broadcasting Act, to sell television advertising time to *Adbusters*.

The court's dismissal reiterated the rulings of North American courts that have found private TV broadcasters under no obligation to allow the public access to public airwaves.

"This case goes right to the very heart of democracy—[about] who has a voice and who doesn't," Lasn says.

Of the major broadcasters, only CNN has aired *Adbusters'* "Buy Nothing Day" commercials (or "subvertisements") that tell people not to go shopping the Friday after Thanksgiving.

One of the subvertisements mocks Calvin Klein's black-and-white underwear ads. This 30-second parody concludes with an ultra-slim model replaced by a more normally proportioned woman bent over a toilet as if giving into a bulimic impulse. "Why are nine out of 10 women dissatisfied with

[art space]



Anarchitecture in the U.S.A.

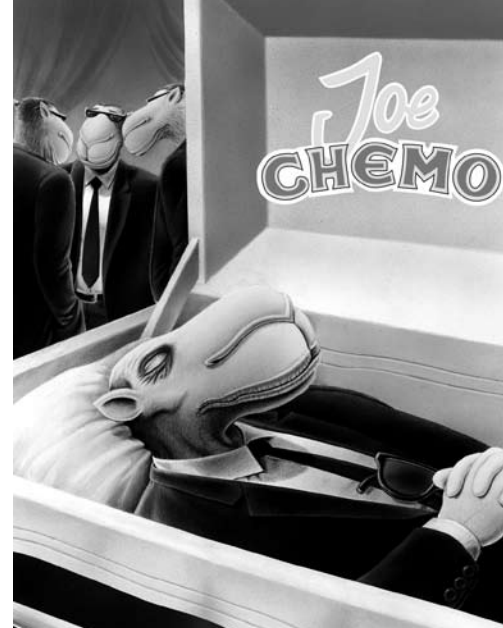
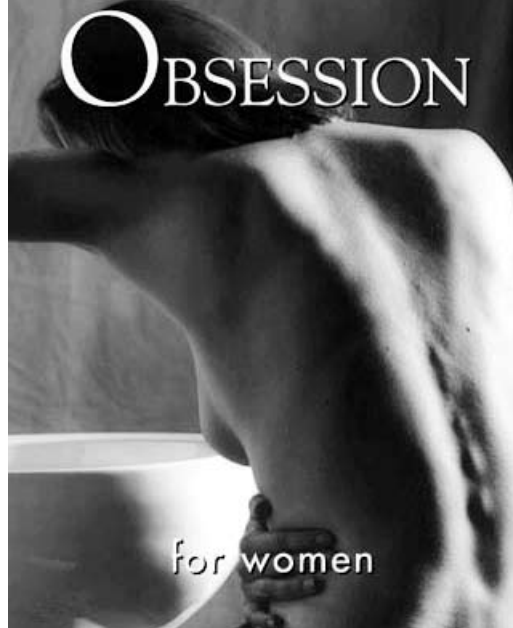
In February, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) opened "You are the Measure," a retrospective of the late artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978).

Matta-Clark tweaked ordinary materials into thought-provoking pieces: a cut from the walls of an abandoned Lower Eastside warehouse; a glass case full of shoulder-length dreadlocks with reattachment instructions; a wall of compacted street trash ("Garbage Wall," see left).

According to his widow, Jane Crawford, Matta-Clark's work confronted "the social implications of architecture," which he believed contributed to the stark injustices of '70s New York City. Matta-Clark called his work "Anarchitecture."

The exhibit will run until May 4.

—Anna Grace Schneider



Major television networks in Canada and the United States have refused to air *Adbusters'* spoof ads, called 'subvertisements.'

some aspect of their own bodies?" the narrator asks blankly. "The beauty industry is the beast."

(The rejected ads, along with the tape-recorded refusals from major media organizations, are available at www.adbusters.org.)

Lasn first filed his suit in 1995, after the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) terminated an advertising contract when the automobile industry complained about an *Adbusters* anti-car ad. The Supreme Court of Canada, however, chose not to hear the case.

In 2004, following a string of CanWest refusals to air any of *Adbusters'* 30-second TV parodies that ridiculed the forestry, fast food, pharmaceutical and high fashion industries, Lasn filed suit against the corporation, which owns three major daily newspapers and a majority of TV stations in Vancouver.

"We just want this high-minded, legal right to walk into a television station and buy airtime under the same rules and conditions as advertising agencies do," Lasn says.

Adbusters is considering an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada—again.

"We're not just trying to win a legal battle," Lasn says. "We're trying to create a sort of media literacy lesson for all the people in North America to show the fact that there is no democracy on the public airwaves."

"It's pretty ridiculous that a nonprofit, public interest group can't buy advertis-

ing on the public airwaves," says Steve Anderson, coordinator of the nonprofit Canadian Campaign for Democratic Media. "What's interesting is that the CBC, specifically, wouldn't allow this, because the CBC, unlike PBS [in the United States], runs advertisements."

Lasn is optimistic about efforts to democratize the public airwaves, and says he may bring suit against U.S. broadcasters under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) rather than on constitutional grounds, where U.S. courts have consistently sided with broadcasters.

Currently in development is an ad for *Adbusters'* Blackspot shoes, which are made at a union factory out of organic hemp and old tires. When the Blackspot ads are finished, Lasn plans to pitch them to MTV. Unlike previous ads, the Blackspot ad will promote a product, and therefore not be restricted by broadcasters' advocacy ad guidelines.

"This actually happens fairly frequently [in the United States], that groups try to buy ad time and networks refuse to sell it," says Angela Campbell, a law professor at Georgetown University and director of its Institute for Public Representation, a program at the school that specializes in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issues. "The court almost always sides with the broadcasters," she says.

Campbell points to the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *CBS v. Demo-*

cratic National Committee. Major news networks were pressured to air ads opposing the Vietnam War, and the high court ruled that broadcasters can control editorial content, and are thus free to choose what ads they want to run.

Campbell says the court cited the Fairness Doctrine, which obligated broadcasters to air different perspectives on an issue. And because the networks' coverage of the Vietnam War was already in accordance with the statute, it was not necessary for the public to see ads against the war.

"Subsequently, our FCC repealed the Fairness Doctrine," she says, "and one could argue that today, when we don't have the Fairness Doctrine as sort of that backstop, it's questionable if the case would come out the same way."

In theory, broadcasters are supposed to serve the public, and that is the standard the FCC uses for granting and renewing broadcast licenses for networks to use the airwaves.

"The majority of the FCC today takes the attitude that public interest means whatever the marketplace will bear," Campbell says. "There are some public interests they are concerned about, but they don't have very many enforceable standards. So the stations can do pretty much whatever they want."

Ultimately, Lasn hopes to begin dismantling media conglomerates with antitrust lawsuits, demanding the media devote at least a minute of public airtime

REALITY FOR MEN

Calvin Klien

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADBUSTERS

for every hour devoted to corporate interests, and establishing a new human right—the right to communicate.

“How come we the people don’t have access to one of the most powerful social communication mediums of our time, the television?” Lasn asks. “There is this new human right in the information age, this right to communicate, which goes farther than freedom of speech.” ■

RHETORIC

‘Yes, We Can’ ... Do What?

By Cassandra West

BY NOW, WE’RE used to the static that accompanies the election season.

It’s a streaming wave of wordplay, phrases, slogans, sound bites, jargon, half-truths, half lies, polished prose and prosaic parsing—a kind of low-register noise we tolerate, half listening, half tuning out because it’s not going away. Kind of like living near an airport.

What we mostly hear aren’t the complete sentences spelling out specifics, visions and appealing ideas. (Who really has time to digest whole paragraphs of policy and wonkery anyway, and still make time for all the other stuff coming at them?)

Toss out some bite-size chunks and the public will eat them up. A word here,

a phrase there—prose that make us feel like we know what a candidate stands for, why we should pledge our support.

It’s just so easy to love the sound of all those incomplete thoughts. They’re sweet hopeful sentiments that play lightly but powerfully in our ears:

“Change we can believe in.”

“Yes, we can.”

“This is our time.”

“Ready for change.”

“Keeping America’s promise.”

“Fired up, ready to go.”

(Apologies if these examples are drawn mostly from Sen. Barack Obama’s campaign, but it has elevated incomplete thoughts to an art form this year and used them effectively to excite and motivate its supporters—an observation worth noting.)

These tidy, compact phrases resound with possibility. But something is missing—a thought that completes them.

Don’t you want to know what the change *is* that we can believe in?

Yes, we can ... do what, exactly?

Why is this our time?

What is it we can change?

How can we keep America’s promise?

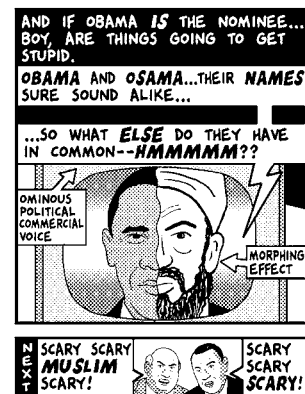
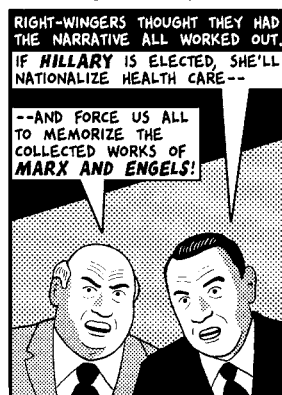
We’re not likely to make the progress packed into political promises if we fail to get past the prose. Being fired up and ready to go means nothing if we haven’t the faintest idea where we’re trying to go.

Let’s fill in some blanks. Let’s not leave ourselves hanging. Do we think, come Nov. 5, those phrases will complete themselves and suddenly we’ll have some collective clarity that will set us on the path of progress?

Don’t look to the media to help you get there or to ask any candidates for even a glimpse of their roadmap. The media are more consumed with the style, not digging for the substance of anything the public hopes for. The media remain so entrenched in and completely absorbed with celebrity culture that even a presidential campaign gets reported on as though it’s the run-up to the Oscars. Who will be best actor? Best actress? Who will cry onstage? Who will give the acceptance speech that will be the talk of the nation the next morning?

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



In February, following Super Tuesday and Obama's string of primary and caucus victories, media reports went into overdrive describing the euphoric crowds filling arenas and stadiums, emergency medical teams on call in case someone passed out while the candidate spoke. More media stories focused on the eloquence and the oratory of this "new kind of politician" who was appealing to the young and independents—that elusive herd of the electorate that has been so hard to corral.

Rather than digging deeper to examine what people are hoping for—besides a new face in the White House—the media hold the public in thrall with the emotional tenor of the campaign. The media dispense incomplete thoughts and incomplete stories along with the politicians. Is it because we live in daily news cycles and spin cycles that not enough time and effort go into serving up anything more than finger-food phrases?

Perhaps the public will at some point regret not ordering a more nutritious serving of political rhetoric during a time when so much is uncertain and unsaid.

We should think, too, about what does get said about our candidates.

In what could be called tough gender-on-gender reporting, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd seems to take pleasure in getting her licks on Sen. Hillary Clinton. During the high primary month of February, the author of *Are Men Necessary?* became the undisputed champion of the male candidate. And in doing so, Dowd worked the most remarkable metamorphosis: She turned Clinton into a male and Obama into a female, referring over and over to Clinton's masculine attributes and Obama's feminine tendencies. In one column, the headline that some outlets used with the syndicated commentary read: "Macho Clinton loses out to feminized Obama." Dowd wrote that Clinton was "trying to out-macho Obama" while "Obama tapped into his inner chick and turned the other cheek" against a charge from Clinton.

So, in some odd way, you could say Dowd *did* support the woman and kept

excerpt



EMASCULATOR IF YOU PAY, WHORE IF YOU DON'T

From He's a Stud, She's a Slut and 49 Other Double Standards Every Woman Should Know (Seal Press, May 2008) by Jessica Valenti, founder and executive editor of Feministing.com.

I make more money than my boyfriend. A good deal more. ... That means that I tend to pick up the check more often than he does—especially because I'm a big (BIG) fan of eating out. He, on the other hand, is happy to eat boxed Mac and Cheese five nights a week. This doesn't cause problems in our relationship—it actually works out for the both of us. But according to dating "experts" and societal expectations, I'm breaking the rules. I'm "emasculating" my boyfriend by not letting him take care of me. Or something. ...

A September 2007 article in the *New York Times* explored the supposedly recent trend of successful young women making more money than their significant others and how it has affected their dating lives: "Women are encountering forms of hostility they weren't prepared to meet, and are trying to figure out how to balance pride in their accomplishments against their perceived need to bolster the egos of the men they date."

Bolstering egos ... seriously? Is masculinity so damn fragile that it can't handle being treated to dinner? ...

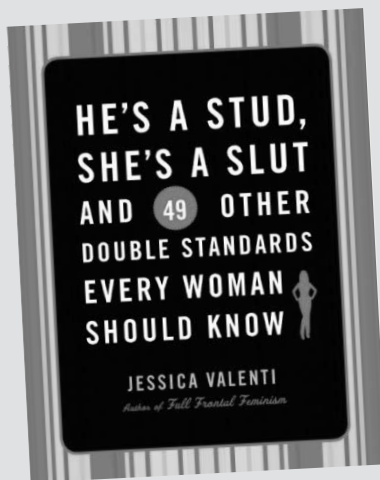
But it's not just trend pieces in the Style section that's addressing dating etiquette. Take this charming segment from CBS, for example: Reviving Dating Rules. Along the same don't-emasculate-through-success-and-confidence lines, dating "expert" April Beyer says that women should never pay for dates while in the courting process and never ask men out. Because it would interfere with their hunger instincts or some such shit.

Then, of course, there's the other side of the "who pays" debate. Women who happily and readily accept dinners and gifts who follow the "rules," are often called out as gold diggers. The term "dinner whore" is a newer one. ...

On Urban Dictionary, a "dinner whore" is defined as follows: "A girl who is exclusively after a free meal or an expensive gift. She actively seeks out dates with well-off men who will wine and dine her at upscale restaurants."

Charming. Is there seriously a new trend of women going out with men simply for the luxury of a free meal? I doubt it. But it's a great way of painting women who dare to follow the traditional dating rules as whores.

We can't win either way.



her feminist credentials intact.

When a columnist can use mere words to change someone's gender, it's hard to argue that words don't matter.

Words matter so much in this election. Ideas put into words that lead us to real action and solutions are the only

hope we have of confronting the harsh realities facing this country—poverty, healthcare reform, gender and racial inequality, economic woes and two wars draining our resources.

And that's why we should demand a few more words to fill in the blanks. ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

Pig Intestines, Downer Cows



CORRUPTION AND INCOMPETENCE in federal bureaucracies are enough to make your blood run thin.

In February, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) admitted that it had allowed into the country tainted, reportedly untested heparin. Distributed by Illinois-based Baxter International, the blood thinner was injected into thousands of vulnerable patients and was linked to adverse effects in more than 800 people, as well as 19 deaths. Given the flawed reporting system, the actual toll is unknowable. But it was preventable.

Baxter imported much of the 35 million vials of heparin it sold last year in the United States from Changzhou SPL. The Chinese company included crude heparin squeezed from the intestines of slaughtered pigs processed in filthy kitchen factories that would make a backwoods meth lab look like an Intel clean room.

The FDA never inspected SPL or most of the 3,249 firms on its list of approved importers, and never tracked the supply chain.

Funding for inspections is down nearly 30 percent under President Bush, according to Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), chair of the appropriations panel responsible for FDA funding. At the current rate, the FDA would need more than 13 years to cover all the approved foreign firms. Meanwhile the administration panders to Big Pharma by banning the importation of high-quality, low-priced drugs manufactured in Canada.

Clearly, the current FDA head, Andrew von Eschenbach—an old friend of Bush—is doing a heck of a job.

Federal agencies—such as the FDA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—are hobbled by ineptitude and in thrall to political and corporate interests.

FEMA, the poster child for criminal negligence, has sat for two years on hard evidence that trailers warehousing Hurricane Katrina victims were exposing residents to dangerous levels of formaldehyde, linked to cancer and lung disease.

In early 2006, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) excoriated FEMA's leadership for failure "to understand and address the public health implications" of exposure to the toxin. A year later, the agency that brought us duct tape to counter terrorist attacks took action: It advised trailer residents simply to air out their homes. (David Paulison, author of the duct tape strategy, now heads FEMA.)

As of Feb. 1, approximately 38,297 Katrina households were still living in toxic trailers. A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study pushed FEMA to acknowledge the danger and warn residents.

Part of the problem with the federal bureaucracies is that their areas of authority can overlap, conflict or leave gaps. While no agency has authority over formaldehyde levels in private homes, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration limits exposure to 0.75 parts per million (ppm) for an eight-hour day. Katrina victims breathed up to .59 ppm for years at a time, according to the CDC, and levels were likely far higher when the trailers were new and the weather was warm.

As for the USDA, the department is slower on its feet than the downer cows dragged through its meat inspections system. An animal rights group—not USDA investigators—documented the gruesome sight of dying and diseased cows, riding forklifts to slaughter. The news prompted the February recall of 143 million pounds of beef from Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Co. By the time the USDA acted, much of the beef had already been served in school lunches.

In a separate incident in 2007, almost 12 weeks passed between the first illness linked to E. coli contamination and the USDA's recall of 21.7 million pounds of Topps Meat hamburger.

Conflicts of interest, cronyism, poor leadership and dispirited staffs have compromised our federal bureaucracies. Underfunding is also a problem, but "funds alone cannot fix an agency that routinely fails at its most basic responsibilities," said DeLauro at a February congressional hearing.

The system intended to protect the public is more tainted than backroom heparin, more toxic than FEMA trailers and more suspect than downer cows.

When Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.), head of the subcommittee that oversees the FDA, requested a briefing on heparin, the FDA said it was too busy. "Maybe it's time that we replace the leadership at the FDA," Stupak said.

Maybe that's not enough. Maybe Congress should exercise oversight and the new president should invest the political and financial capital necessary to revamp the structure, priorities and loyalties of the country's failed bureaucracies. ■

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Nationalism

Continued from page 33

Redefining 'tax and spend'

Since 2004, when Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) lambasted "Benedict Arnold" companies that move jobs and operations overseas to avoid taxes, tax reform in the name of economic nationalism has become a staple of Democratic Party orthodoxy. Now, that orthodoxy has a bill name.

The Patriot Corporation Act, a bill sponsored by Obama, would provide tax advantages and federal contracting preferences to companies that maintain their operations and employment base in the United States. This renewed effort to legislatively distinguish—and target—companies based on geographic employment and tax decisions started in 2002 with two little-noticed bills.

Back then, Connecticut tool company Stanley Works was making plans to exploit a tax loophole and officially reincorporate in Bermuda to avoid paying U.S. taxes. The story spurred a local outbreak of economic nationalism, and, in response, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) passed a high-profile amendment banning federal contracts from going to companies that perform such "inversions," as they are called.

At the same time, Reps. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Ron Paul (R-Texas) forced a House vote on their bill to ban the government's Export-Import Bank from continuing to subsidize companies that are simultaneously reducing their domestic workforce and increasing their foreign workforce.

Both initiatives were ultimately killed, as was Sanders' follow-up in the Senate in 2007, when he authored legislation to prohibit companies that announce mass domestic layoffs from receiving H-1B visas that allow them to import foreign workers at lower wages. The rise of economic nationalism could help these kinds of spending limitation bills make a big comeback—and not just in Congress.

In January, Oklahoma Rep. Rebecca Hamilton (D-Oklahoma City) introduced a bill to prohibit her state from contracting with any company that has shut down domestic facilities and opened up foreign ones, unless that company agrees to comply with American wage, safety and human

rights standards. Hamilton has smartly wrapped her initiative in the immigration issue. She notes that one of the root causes of illegal immigration is corporate exploitation of foreign countries' poor standards, which forces many people to cross the border in search of better conditions.

"The state of Oklahoma is basically targeting Hispanic people and other immigrants when we should be targeting the companies that take advantage of lax border enforcement to exploit lower-wage workers in both countries," Hamilton says.

That message and her bill are easily replicable, and may serve as a national model in state legislatures across the country.

Neutral 'nationalism'

Admittedly, the term "nationalism" can elicit legitimate fear. The impulse to prioritize the home nation over everything else has an ugly side, one that at least some members of the media seem interested in stoking, as shown by the recurring hysteria over Obama's multinational and religious heritage. Indeed, in February, *Time's* Mark Halperin advised Republicans to "emphasize Barack Hussein Obama's unusual name and exotic background through a Manchurian Candidate prism."

But as with most impulses, nationalism is really value neutral. It can be used for both horrific and terrific causes, and today's political tectonics suggest the chance for the latter to ascend over the former.

Progressive populism has proven to be an electoral force nationwide. Congress and state legislatures are designing an agenda that turns today's economic nationalism into a legislative program.

Last month, a coalition of progressive groups launched a national antiwar campaign to make the public see Iraq War spending as the cause of the recession and underinvestment here at home—a nationalist, America-first message at its core. And because the war is sending so much money overseas, Republicans attempting to appease their "fiscal conservative" base could be increasingly unwilling to obstruct measures that reduce corporate welfare and redirect taxpayer resources to the homeland.

In short, American politics is perfectly aligned to help progressives use nationalism for our economic agenda. ■

Obamanomics

Continued from page 35

Making taxes more progressive by rolling back Bush tax cuts for the wealthy is a start. But evidence from rich countries—compiled by University of Arizona sociologist Lane Kenworthy—shows that governments reduce inequality more through spending (say, on healthcare or free education) than through progressive taxation alone. The problem with Obama's plan is that it relies heavily on varied tax cuts (and a few hikes) to bring change.

Great expectations

AFL-CIO Chief Economist Ron Blackwell says the next president will need to tackle three sets of problems.

First, the trade deficit and borrowing need to be curtailed, since they have flooded global capital markets with dollars, fueling the housing bubble and recovery driven by consumer debt.

Second, the federal government needs an economic strategy that does not rely on speculative bubbles but pricks them before they become a danger to the overall economy. Financial markets must be more transparent and more closely regulated.

Third, workers need bargaining power so that wages grow. This would provide not only a better standard of living but also the foundation of a stronger economy and a more egalitarian and cohesive society. Government must not only restore the right to organize but also boost wages and improve working conditions (such as mandating paid family leave and sick leave).

Workers can effectively raise their wages when labor markets are tight. The Federal Reserve and the federal government need to make full employment at least as important a goal as relatively stable prices.

Obama has not promised anything so ambitious. There is a bright side however. "The fact that he's raising hope, that's tremendously important," argues one uncommitted progressive economist, whose organization has not endorsed a candidate. "Bill Clinton's genius was lowering expectations. But revolutions, historian Barrington Moore argued, come when there are rising expectations." ■

now that we've gone solar, do we
get to be called . . .

hippies?

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